

# AN OUTLINE OF INDIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

VOLUME I

by

and

edited by

RAGHUBIR DAYAL

A. E. T. BARROW

*Formerly, Principal,  
Cambridge School,  
New Delhi and  
Senior History Master,  
Mayo College, Ajmer*

*Secretary,  
Council for the  
Indian School Certificate  
Examinations, New Delhi*



ORIENT LONGMAN

AN OUTLINE OF INDIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE  
VOLUME I

---

© Orient Longman Ltd., 1974

First Published May 1974

**Registered Office :**

3/5, Asaf Ali Road,  
New Delhi 110 001

**Other Offices :**

Nicol Road, Ballard Estate  
Bombay 400 038

17, Chittaranjan Avenue  
Calcutta 700 013

36-A, Mount Road  
Madras 600 002

1/24, Asaf Ali Road  
New Delhi 110 001

80/1, Mahatma Gandhi Road  
Bangalore 560 001

3-5-820, Hyderguda  
Hyderabad 500 001

**Published by**

Ravi Vyas  
Orient Longman Ltd.  
1/24 Asaf Ali Road  
New Delhi 110 001

**Printed by**

C.L. Jain  
Navchetan Press (P) Ltd.  
(Lessees of Arjun Press)  
4132, Naya Bazar  
Delhi 110 006

## EDITOR'S NOTE

History at the secondary school level is the "stage of precision", the stage of grammar of the subject. Every subject has its own grammar which may be taken broadly to mean the systematic arrangement and analysis of the body of knowledge with which the subject deals. It is not meant to be interesting, —the stage of romance of the subject, the vividness of novelty belongs to the pre-secondary period. At the secondary stage the pupils must acquire a basic knowledge of the most significant events and personalities of history in sequence and in context. This knowledge is the evidence upon which explanations and judgements must be founded.

This series of books is an attempt to provide the grammar of Indian History and Culture and will be relevant in understanding lessons and assignments given by the teacher and reference books. This series is recommended for the *Indian Certificate of Secondary Education examination*.

A. E. T. BARROW





## CONTENTS

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
1. Pre-Historic Period	1
2. The Indus Valley Civilisation	5
3. The Coming of the Aryans—About 2500 B.C.	11
4. The Later Vedic Civilisation	18
5. India in the Sixth Century B.C. and the Rise of Magadha	23
6. Jainism and Buddhism	27
7. Alexander's Invasion : 326 B.C.	34
8. The Mauryan Empire : (324 B.C.—184 B.C.)	40
9. Asoka, The Royal Monk : (273 B.C.—232 B.C.)	46
10. Condition of Society under the Mauryan Empire (324 B.C.—184 B.C.)	52
11. Foreign Invasions : 184 B.C.—300 A.D.	56
12. The Gupta Empire	70
13. Harsha and His Times	82
14. The Rajput Period : 700—1200 A.D.	100
15. The Arab Conquest of Sind	107
16. The Muslim Conquest of India	112
17. Indian Culture and Colonies Abroad	124
18. Foundation of the Sultanate	132
19. The Khalji Dynasty : 1290—1320 A.D.	146
20. The Tughlaq Dynasty : 1320—1430 A.D.	162
21. Sayyad and Lody Dynasties : 1414—1526 A.D.	182
22. Breakup of Sultanate and Rise of Provincial Kindoms	192
23. Conditions of Society Under the Sultanate	216

# CONTENTS





## PRE-HISTORIC PERIOD

## Men of the Old Stone Age

## Their tools

## How they lived



tigers, panthers and lions, which sometimes killed and ate them.

It is not certain how they learnt the use of fire. Some say that men of the Stone Age did not know the use of fire, others hold that they could start a fire by rubbing sticks or stones. The fire was used to keep wild animals away.

### **What they ate**

They did not know how to cultivate land and grow corn, but ate wild fruit, berries, roots and seeds of crops like wheat and barley which grew wild. They also ate meat and hunted boar, buffaloes and antelopes for food. They had no utensils or pottery and, therefore, ate uncooked food.

They did not know what to do with the dead and so allowed the dead bodies to be exposed to the sun. There was no burial or cremation.

Judged by present-day standards, they were uncivilised. They were short, dark in colour and had flat noses and woolly hair, looking very much like the Negrito people of the Andaman islands. It is difficult to say what language they spoke.

### **Men of the New Stone Age**

Throughout the ages men have made efforts to conquer nature, in order to improve their way of living. Men of the Old Stone Age also improved their living conditions. It must have taken them many centuries to do so. Fear of wild animals and natural calamities prompted them to find ways and means to protect themselves. Gradually the Old Stone Age yielded place to the New Stone or Neolithic Age, as it is called. Men of this Age still used weapons, tools and implements made of stone but these were much better designed and were grooved and polished, and thus were more effective and useful. Instead of Quartzite their implements were now made of trap rock.

### **How they lived**

Gradually they found that caves provided better shelter against wild animals, rain, heat and cold. They also learnt the art of painting and decorated their caves with paintings of animals and hunting and dancing scenes. We can still see some



of these caves with paintings of early men of the Stone Age wearing skirts and holding javelins and shields.

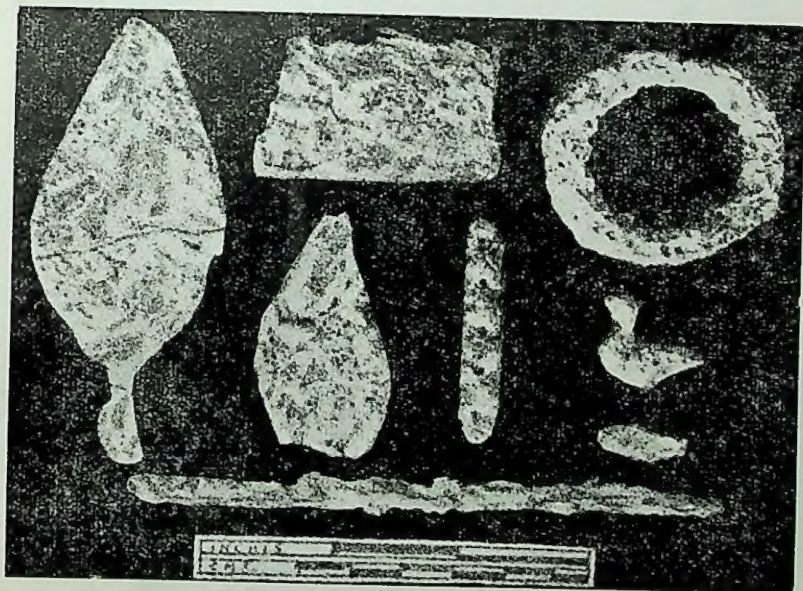
They also learnt how to make cloth from cotton and therefore began to wear cotton clothes as well as hides. Women were fond of jewellery made of shells and beads.

### **Their occupations**

They also learnt how to cultivate the land. They grew crops of wild wheat and barley though cultivation was in a very elementary stage. They also domesticated pets like oxen, dogs, goats and sheep. Since water was very necessary for cultivation, they usually settled along the banks of rivers. They were now cultivators and herdsmen and no longer nomads moving about from place to place. They made pottery with the help of the potter's wheel and cooked their food.

### **Disposal of the dead**

They buried the dead in tombs, and covered these with stones. They believed in life after death and thus sometimes put rice,



*Stone Age Implements*

grain and tools in the tombs along with the bodies.

### The Age of Metal

The struggle of man to conquer nature and to improve his living conditions continued though progress was very slow. After many centuries, he learnt to use metal and the Stone Age gave place to the Age of Metal or Chalcolithic Age. In Northern India, the Stone Age was replaced by the Copper Age and men began to make their weapons and tools of copper. Zinc and copper were discovered and bronze was produced. They realised that weapons made of bronze were stonger. The use of iron, however, was still not known. The men of the Copper Age were fairly civilised; they lived in small settlements, built houses and improved the system of agriculture, their main occupation. They mostly lived in the Indus Basin where there was plenty of water and good soil. Hence their civilisation has been called the Indus Valley Civilisation. (We shall read more about them in the next chapter.)

In South India, however, the transition from the Stone Age to the Iron Age was direct.



## CHAPTER II

# THE INDUS VALLEY CIVILISATION

**M**AN cannot live without water and therefore he has always striven to settle in places where it is easily available. In ancient times men made their settlements along the banks of rivers. They did not know how to dig wells or canals. About 3000 B.C. there existed several large cities in the Indus Basin where along with the Indus there perhaps flowed another river which seemed to have dried after some time. In the course of centuries these cities were destroyed by floods and other natural calamities.

In 1922 the Archaeological Department of the Government of India carried out excavations at Mohenjo-Daro in Sind and Harappa in Montgomery District of the Punjab. Both these places are now in Pakistan. The archaeologists discovered the ruins of large cities where a very civilised people lived about 5,000 years ago.

### Cities

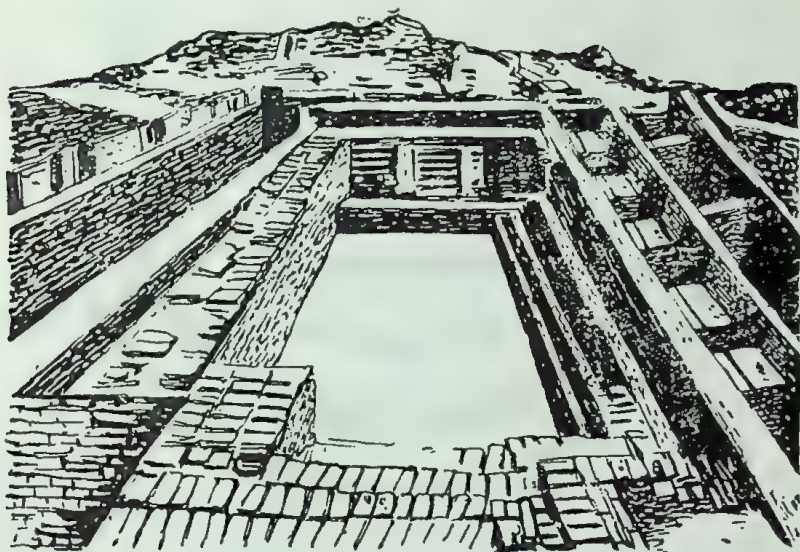
Mohenjo-Daro, or 'Mound of the Dead', was a well-planned city. It had wide roads and streets with *pucca* houses on either side. The houses were made of burnt or unburnt bricks and had usually two or more storeys. Normally, all houses had wells, bathrooms and latrines ; there were underground drains to carry dirty water. In addition to residential houses there were several large houses with thick walls and pillared halls which probably were used as temples or meeting places. At Mohenjo-Daro, they discovered a Great Bath, 180 feet long and 108 feet wide, with galleries and side rooms all round. In the middle there was a swimming pool with steps on either side. At Harappa they discovered a big granary.





*Kaliburga (Rajasthan) cultivated fields with furrows (about 2500B.C.)*





*The Great Bath at Mohenjo-Daro*

### **The people and their occupations**

Agriculture was the chief occupation of the people. They grew different kinds of corn, other crops and cotton. Rice was perhaps not popular. In addition to agriculture, there were a number of industries; pottery, weaving, jewellery making and carpentry were common. People carried on trade and commerce with countries in the south, east and west. Perhaps they used stone weights and seals as coins.

### **Their dress**

They made both cotton and woollen cloth, their clothes consisting of two garments, a shroud on the upper part of the body and a skirt, very much like the modern 'dhoti', on the lower. Both men and women were fond of ornaments and wore necklaces, ear-rings, bracelets and bangles made of gold, silver, ivory and other precious and semi-precious stones.

### **Their food**

Wheat was their main food though they also ate meat. They cooked their food in earthen pots or vessels made of copper,



*Ornaments of Indus Valley Civilisation*

bronze and porcelain. Sometimes they painted their pottery in attractive designs.

### **Household goods, amusements, pets and weapons**

They used combs, needles and other household goods.



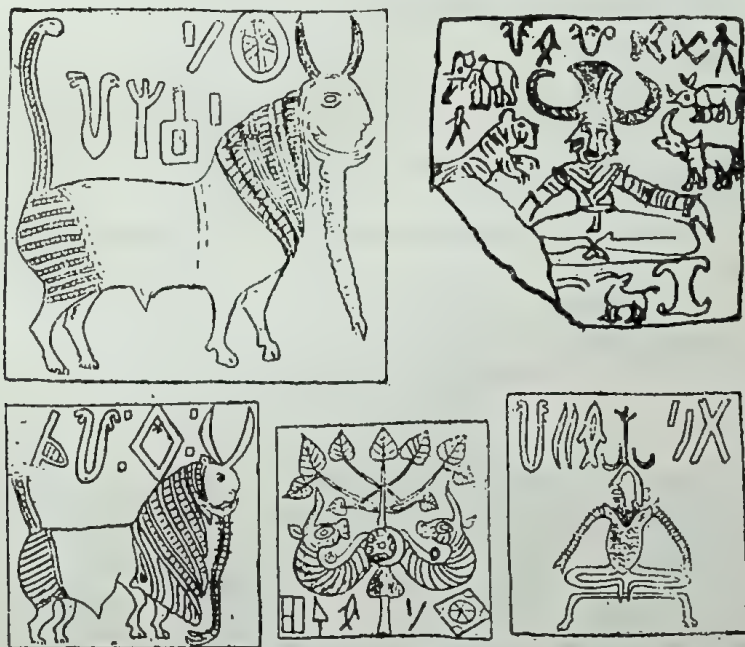
*Toys for Children Found at Mohenjo-daro*

Children played with toys. Men and women were fond of dancing and gambling. They domesticated pets like bulls, buffaloes, sheep, dogs and even elephants and camels.

Their weapons were made of copper and bronze; they did not know the use of iron. The weapons consisted mostly of axes, daggers, spears, bows and arrows. They did not have swords, shields or helmets.

### Seals

In the course of excavations at different sites in Sind, they discovered a large number of seals with figures of animals, a lady and a three-faced god. They also bore pictorial writing



*Seals of the Indus Valley Civilization Period*

which has not been deciphered so far in spite of the best efforts of archaeologists and historians. When, some day some one is able to decipher the writing we will know more about the people of the Indus Valley. Such seals have been found in the Middle East countries also. This shows that either this civilisation extended

to the shores of the Mediterranean or there was intercourse between the people of India and those of the Middle East.

### **Their religion**

It is difficult to say what religion they followed. From the figure of the women on their seals people have concluded that they worshipped a 'Mother Goddess' or 'Shakti'. They also worshipped 'Shiva' or 'Pashupati' as on several seals there is the figure of a god with three faces surrounded by a number of animals. 'Trishul', the emblem of Shiva, was also engraved on several seals. They perhaps also worshipped stones, trees, and animals.

The dead were either cremated or buried.

### **The race**

Who were these people who developed such a high civilisation in the Indus Valley? It is generally accepted that they were Dravidians who were later defeated and driven away to the south by the Aryans.

The Indus Valley Civilisation was one of the oldest of the world.



### CHAPTER III

## THE COMING OF THE ARYANS—ABOUT 2500 B.C.

**O**N the eve of the Aryan invasion, a mixture of several races lived in India. These included primitive Negritos, Kols and Dravidians. Of these, the Dravidians had developed a high standard of living, called the Indus Valley Civilisation (about which we have read in the preceding chapter). In the course of time all these races were overthrown by a new race of invaders known as the Aryans. After several centuries they conquered the whole of Northern India and later spread even to the south.

### **The characteristics of the Aryan people**

They were tall and fair people with very sharp features. Good riders, cultivators and herdsmen, they roamed from place to place in search of pastures and fertile land.

### **Their original home**

It is not clear from where they came to India. There are several theories about their original home : (1) some historians say that they lived in the valley of the river Danube in Europe; (2) some say that they came from the Arctic Region; (3) still others say that they came from the Steppes of Central Asia; and (4) some Indian scholars hold that they were not foreigners but were inhabitants of India from the very beginning. However, it is widely accepted that they migrated from the Steppes of Central Asia in search of pastures and fertile land and in this process went in all directions. Some went to Europe and several European nations belong to the Aryan race but some moved southwards towards the Iranian tableland. The latter were known as the Indo-Iranian branch of the Aryans; one branch went to Iran and the other came to India. The early Iranians

and Indians belonged to the same stock of people.

### **The Indian invasion**

The Aryans were divided into a number of tribes under their respective leaders. They entered India through the Khyber, Gomal and Bolan passes on the north-west frontiers. After a bitter struggle with the Dravidians who were living in the Indus Valley, they gradually conquered the Punjab, Sind and parts of Rajasthan. In the course of centuries fresh waves of Aryan invaders arrived and the older Aryans moved further east and south, conquering the whole of Northern India by about 600 B.C.

### **The Aryan or Vedic Civilisation**

The Aryans developed a culture of their own, popularly known as the Vedic Civilisation, as it centred on their religious books, the four 'Vedas'. (In the following pages, we shall study their political, social, economic, cultural and religious conditions).

### **Political conditions**

As mentioned earlier, the Aryans were divided into a number of tribes. Each tribe set up a principality of its own and thus were established a number of States in Northern India. Some of these states were monarchical but there were a few republics also.

The head of a state was called "Rajan" or king and the territory over which he ruled was called "Jana". It was further sub-divided into smaller units called "Vis" and "Grama". The head of a "Grama" or village was called "Gramini".

The Rajan was usually hereditary. His chief duty was to protect the tribe and the territory, to lead his men in war and to rule for the welfare of his people. He was assisted by two bodies of men called the 'Sabha' and 'Samiti', the 'Sabha' being a Council of Elders consisting mostly of the nobles, and the 'Samiti' an assembly of the representatives of the people. Whenever there was no heir to the throne, he was elected by these bodies. The king also had his advisers, who were consulted on all occasions. Another important adviser was the "Senani" or the Commander-in Chief who helped the king in times of war.

At the village level the "Gramini" was the king's principal adviser and officer. The army consisted chiefly of infantry, cavalry and chariots.

The Aryans made weapons of iron which were far superior to those of the Dravidians who had only copper weapons. Spears, swords and axes together with bows and arrows, helmets and shields were their chief weapons of offence and defence. In battle they carried their banners. Because of their superior weapons and cavalry they succeeded in defeating the various races who inhabited India. The conquered people were enslaved and were called the "Dasyus".

### **Social conditions**

When the Aryans first came to India they were a wandering people. But after conquering Northern India, they established their own principalities under their different leaders and in addition to villages built cities.

### **The joint family system**

The family was the unit of society and they had the joint family system. The oldest male member was the head and several generations lived together and had common property.

Ordinarily a man had one wife but polygamy was allowed. Polyandry was looked down upon. Widow remarriage was permissible. The custom of 'Sati' did not exist. There was no child marriage or 'purdah' system. The princesses were married at a 'Swayamvar' where they had the right to choose their husbands. Sometimes the parents laid down a condition to be fulfilled by the suitors. Women generally depended upon menfolk for livelihood and protection but they were treated with honour. Girls were educated, some of them composing hymns and writing prose and poetry. The wife took part in religious ceremonies and her presence was essential at all sacrifices.

The Aryans both cremated and buried the dead.

### **Dress**

They usually wore three garments: the undergarment or 'Antariya' was called 'Nivi', the upper garment or 'Uttariya' was called 'Vasa' or 'Paridhana'. They also wore a mantle called 'Adhivasa' or 'Atka' or 'Drapi'. Clothes were made of cotton,

wool or skin and were colourful and sometimes embroidered. People were fond of gold ornaments and also wore floral wreaths. Both men and women wore turbans (head dresses) and had long hair.

### Food

The Aryans ate wheat, barley, rice, milk products, vegetables and fruits. They also ate meat. They drank two intoxicating drinks called 'Soma' and 'Sura'.

### Caste system

The origin of the caste system is not clear. Some people say that caste and 'Varna' meant the same thing and that people wearing clothes of similar colour or having similar complexion were put in one category. Others hold that since the Aryans had to fight their enemies for a long time, they were divided into three classes so that the normal work of the tribe might not suffer. These three classes were the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. This division was based purely on work. The Brahmanas looked after religion and education, the Kshatriyas formed the warrior class and administered the State, the Vaishyas were farmers, businessmen and industrialists. A fourth caste, the Sudras, was added later. These consisted mainly of the enslaved non-Aryans and sometimes of those Aryans who had fallen from the high moral standards laid down for them.

In the beginning the caste system was flexible. It depended entirely upon occupation and people could change their caste with the change in their profession. Inter-marriages amongst the first three castes were common.

### Economic conditions

The word Aryan means 'tillers of the soil'. The Aryans were cultivators essentially, living in villages where there was plenty of water, good soil and a number of pastures. Their economic life centred on the village under a 'Gramini'. They cultivated land with the help of ploughs and raised various crops such as wheat, barley and rice. They also knew the use of manure and irrigated their fields by canals or wells. Like modern farmers



they also kept a number of cattle. The cow, on account of its milk and milk products, was held in very high esteem. They also domesticated pets such as horses, dogs and sheep.

They did not neglect industry and trade. The country was self-sufficient economically. A number of artisans or skilled workers, weavers, blacksmiths, goldsmiths and potters plied their industry. Cloth, vessels, pottery, jewellery, weapons, chariots and other articles were all made in the country. Trade was carried on by barter or the exchange system; it is doubtful if they used coins. The Aryans not only carried on trade within the country but they had trade relations with the neighbouring people also. The common means of transport were chariots, drawn by horses or oxen.

### **Their religion**

The Aryans believed in one God as is clear from the following hymn.

“Who is our Father, our Creator, Maker,  
Who every place doth know and every creature,  
By whom alone to gods their names were given,  
To Him all other creatures go, to ask Him.”

But He bore many names according to the following hymn :

“They call Him Indra, Mitra, Varuna,  
And Agni he is the heavenly bird Garutmat :  
To what is One, the poets give many a name,  
They call it Agni, Yama, Matarisvan”.

God was all powerful and had numerous manifestations and He was worshipped in various forms called gods and goddesses, such as ‘Varuna’, ‘Usha’, ‘Agni’ and ‘Indra’. The Aryans sang hymns in praise of these gods to invoke their blessings. They also performed sacrifices and made offerings of milk, ghee and grain to gods who in their turn blessed them with happiness, success and prosperity. There were no temples and no idol worship.

The religious books of the Aryans are called the ‘Vedas’. They are believed to be revealed books or ‘Srutis’. The ‘Vedas’ are four in number, namely, Rig Veda, Sam Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda. In the earlier Vedic period only the Rig Veda was compiled. It consists of 1028 hymns and is the

oldest book of the world. Its hymns, sung in praise of gods, were learnt by heart and transmitted from father to son. It was reduced to writing much later.

The other three 'Vedas' namely, Sam Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda were composed in the later Vedic age.

### **Art and science**

The early Aryans did not know the art of writing and knowledge was transmitted from generation to generation orally. They had wonderful memories to retain such a vast store of knowledge.

The Aryans had learnt the art of building houses made of wood and reeds. They were tastefully decorated because they knew the art of sculpture.

### **What the Aryans gave to the World**

They gave to the world a new language called Sanskrit and a new religion based on the four Vedas. The Aryans were highly intellectual people and had developed the ancient Hindu civilisation which tried to answer many questions such as, "Why was man created?", "What is his relationship with God?" and "What happens to him after death?" Their religious philosophy was later compiled in the form of books called the 'Upanishads'. The Aryans also brought horses with them, used for riding, pulling chariots, driving herds of cattle, horse racing and warfare. The Aryans also brought iron weapons.

### **Comparison of the Indus Valley Civilisation and the Aryan Civilisation**

The Indus Valley Civilisation and the Aryan Civilisation are the oldest civilisations. It will be interesting to compare their chief characteristics at this stage.

The Indus Valley Civilisation was essentially urban, i.e., it was developed in cities, while the Aryan Civilisation was rural, i.e., centred on the village community.

The people of the Indus Valley used weapons made of copper, while the Aryans had iron weapons, which were stronger and more effective.

The Indus Valley Civilisation held the bull in high esteem, while the cow was sacred to the Aryans.

The Indus Valley Civilisation did not know the use of the horse; the Aryans introduced it in India.

The Aryans had a monarchical system of government, while it is not certain what form of government prevailed in the Indus Valley Civilisation.

There was image worship in the Indus Valley Civilisation, as is clear from the large number of seals, while the Aryans did not believe in idol worship. They believed in one God who was the Creator, the Sustainer and the Destroyer of this universe.

The Aryans were divided into four castes socially, while there were no sub-divisions of society in the Indus Valley Civilisation.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LATER VEDIC CIVILISATION

**T**HE Aryans first settled in the Punjab but gradually spread further east and south as fresh waves of Aryans arrived. In the course of their expansion they conquered the entire Indo-Gangetic plain up to the Vindhya. This region was called 'Aryavrata' by them and they divided it into five regions, namely Eastern or "Prachi Desha", Western or "Pratichi Desha", Northern or "Udichi Desha", Southern or "Dakshina Desha" and Central or "Madhya Desha". A number of towns such as Ayodhya, Varanasi, Mithila, Hastinapur and Kampil were established.

During the period of expansion they had to wage wars among themselves as well as against many Indian races and their contact with the latter brought about a number of changes in their political, social, economic and religious conditions.

#### **Political conditions**

Small states were replaced by large ones as a result of the wars of expansion. Some of the states were monarchical, i.e., headship was hereditary and the head was called a monarch or a king. Others were republics where the government consisted of elected representatives of the people or the head of the State was elected by the people. However, most states were monarchical. With the establishment of bigger States the power of the kings also increased. They were now called "Samrats" or emperors and performed Yagyas such as "Ashwamedh Yagya" (horse-sacrifice) to show their prowess. As a rule monarchy was hereditary. The king was the leader of the tribe and he protected the people and led them in war. He was also the fountain of justice and under him were a number of paid judicial officers who administered justice. There were no fixed laws and the system of trial was crude.



The Brahmanas were powerful and wielded great power as ministers and advisers, often challenging the king's authority. They alone could help the king in performing various sacrifices and therefore had become indispensable. The old institutions of 'Sabha' and 'Samiti' still existed. The king appointed a large number of officials to assist him in governing the kingdom. He also introduced the system of taxes because he had to pay his army and spend much money in building roads, wells and providing other amenities for the welfare of the people. As the States became large, they were divided into provinces under governors or "Sthapatis."

### **Social conditions**

The establishment of large Aryan kingdoms brought several non-Aryan tribes under them. The customs, culture and religion of these tribes were very different and their contact with the Aryans brought about changes in the Aryan social organisation also.

### **Caste system**

The caste system became more and more rigid and it was no longer dependent on work but based on birth. Marriages usually took place within the caste and inter-marriages were uncommon. Even the professions became hereditary. Normally a Brahmana's son followed his father's occupation of looking after religion and education, a Kshatriya's son helped the State in administration and in fighting and a Vaishya's son looked after industry, business and trade. Often Brahmanas and Kshatriyas took to other professions also.

The Brahmanas and Kshatriyas established their superiority over the Vaishyas and Sudras. The Brahmanas regarded themselves superior even to the Kshatriyas as they alone were competent to preside over sacrifices which became regular features of the Vedic religion.

### **Position of women**

Changes were brought about in the position of women also. They no longer occupied a place of honour in society nor took part in the public life. They did not attend tribal assemblies nor could they inherit property. Nobles and kings had several

wives, all of whom did not enjoy equal status; some were treated badly. With the decline in the status of women the birth of a daughter was not welcome. The joint family system as it existed in the early Vedic age continued.

There was very little change in the food habits, a large number of people being vegetarian and meat-eating becoming rare. The early Vedic amusements like dancing, singing, racing and gambling were still popular. The pattern in constructing houses and the style of dresses also remained as they were in the early Vedic age.

### **The institution of "Ashram"**

The normal life span of an Aryan was expected to be a hundred years, divided into four equal periods or "Ashrams" of 25 years each. These were known as "Brahmacharya" (Student life), "Grihast" (Married life), "Vanaprastha" (Retired life) and "Sanyas" (Ascetic life). Rules of conduct were laid down for each "Ashram". After the sacred thread ceremony (Upanayan) a student entered the Brahmacharya Ashram and received his education at the feet of his guru or rishi in an 'ashram' or hermitage. He was given an all-round education and developed his mind and body under the benign guidance and care of the guru. During the next stage of "Grihast", he led the life of a house-holder, married, had children and served the State. In the "Ashram of Vanaprastha", he gradually detached himself from the family ties and wandered from place to place seeking spiritual knowledge. The last stage was called the "Sanyas" when he retired to a lonely place and spent his time in worship and meditation to attain "moksha" or freedom from re-birth.

### **Economic condition**

Agriculture continued to be the chief occupation of a very large number of people who lived mostly in villages. Several improvements were made in the manner of cultivation as better implements and tools had been invented. A man's wealth was measured in terms of the cattle he possessed and the cow was still held in very high esteem.

Trade and industry also flourished side by side. There were guilds to control their activities. Women too worked in various

industries, being specially skilled in embroidery and dyeing. The kings encouraged trade by building roads. Trade was also carried on with foreign countries.

### Religious condition

The early Vedic religion was simple. There were no rites or rituals or temples but in the later Vedic age it became complicated. Nature worship gave place to sacrifice, which became an important feature of worship. Sacred rites and ceremonies were performed every day and since their performance required technical knowledge, the presence of a Brahamana at all such functions became essential. Thus the Brahamanas established their superiority over the other castes. The old Vedic gods, such as Varun, Indra and Agni were replaced by the worship of Rudra (Shiva), Vishnu or Krishna. People believed in 'Karma' and transmigration of the soul or re-birth. Therefore, in order to purify themselves and to escape sorrow and suffering, they performed penance and sacrifices. A large number of people also believed in superstitions, charms, spirits and witchcraft.

### Literary development

The three Vedas, namely, Sam Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda, were added during this age. The oldest of the Vedas, Rig Veda, contains hymns in praise of different gods. The Sam Veda, or the book of chants, has several verses of the Rig Veda and some new ones sung at the time of the "Soma" sacrifice. The Yajur Veda or the book of sacrificial prayer, is partly prose and partly poetry. Its verses were chanted at sacrifices. The Atharva Veda, or the book of magic formulas, contains songs and spells which were chanted to cure illnesses or drive away evil spirits.

The Vedas were regarded as "Sruti" or revealed books.

In addition to them, two sacred books associated with the four Vedas appeared, the "Brahmanas" and the "Upanishads". The former dealt with rites and rituals to be observed at sacrifices while the latter discussed Vedic religious philosophy, namely, the relationship between "Brahma" and "Atma" or the universal soul and the individual self and how man could purify himself and reach the state of "moksha" or freedom from rebirth.

In addition to these books, a set of religious books called



the "Aranyakas" or forest books was compiled by the hermits in forests for the guidance and instruction of those who dwelt in the woods or hermitages. They contained rules and regulations for hermits and discussed the significance of rites and rituals. The two great epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which also contains the Gita, were also compiled during this period.

A number of books on non-religious topics such as astronomy, grammar and phonetics were also written. These religious and non-religious books formed a very important source of information about the early history of the Aryan people.

## CHAPTER V

### INDIA IN THE SIXTH CENTURY B.C. AND THE RISE OF MAGADHA

THE known sources of early Indian history are rather meagre, the most important being archaeological finds and literary sources. The former are the only chief source of our knowledge about the Indus Valley Civilisation while the latter provide information about the Aryans. But they are particularly deficient in many ways.

Consequently we know little about the political history of India before the Seventh Century B.C. Even after that our knowledge is scanty and confined to only a few kings and a few States in Northern India, not much being known about the Deccan or the far south.

From the Sixth Century B.C. onwards our sources are increased by the addition of Buddhist and Jain religious books, the Puranas and the epics. We learn from them that there were 16 big States known as the "Mahajanapadas" from Kabul in the north-west to Godavari in the south. These were ruled mostly by kings but there were a few republics or "ganas" also like Vriji, the States of the Mallas, Lichchhavis and the Sakyas.

Among these monarchical and non-monarchical States, there were frequent wars as a result of which some States were conquered by their neighbours. In the middle of the Sixth Century B.C., we hear of four great kingdoms, namely, Avanti in Central India, Vatsa, Kosala and Magadha in the Gangetic Valley.

One of the great rulers of Avanti or Malwa was king Chanda. Pradyota, whose capital was Ujjain. Vatsa (territory near Allahabad) had its capital at Kausambhi; one of its great rulers was Udayana. He carried away the daughter of king Chanda. Pradyota of Avanti and also married a Magadhan princess. Kosala, under king Mahakosala and his son Prasenjit, also was

a powerful State, its capital being Ayodhya. Magadha, ruled by king Bimbisara, had its capital at Girivraj. There were frequent wars among them and as a result Magadha established its supremacy in the Indo-Gangetic Valley.

### THE RISE OF MAGADHA UNDER HARYANKA AND SAISUNAG DYNASTIES

#### **Bimbisara or Srenika**

He became ruler of Magadha about 542 B.C. Strong, powerful and ambitious, he wanted to expand his kingdom and therefore raised a big army and defeated his neighbours. He also extended his territory by marriage alliances with the princesses of Kosala and Vaisali, who brought a number of villages as dowry. He also conquered the kingdom of Anga with its capital at Champa.

He built a new and beautiful capital at Rajgriha (Rajgir) near Patna. An able administrator, Magadha under him became the most powerful State in Eastern India. He did not neglect trade and since there were large deposits of iron ore in the State the iron industry began to flourish. Trade was developed both by road and river and he gradually acquired control over the river Ganges. He also encouraged trade with South India and thus brought about a good deal of prosperity for the people. He was a benevolent ruler who kept himself in touch with his subjects.

Both Mahavir and the Buddha lived in his time and preached their religions to the people.

According to tradition, he was starved to death by his son and successor Ajatasatru.

#### **Ajatasatru (About 500 B.C. to 475 B.C.)**

Ajatasatru or Kunika ruled from 500 B.C. to 475 B.C. One of his early acts was to meet the Buddha and seek forgiveness for murdering his father.

He was a warlike prince like his father and further expanded his kingdom by defeating the ruler of Kosala. He built the fortress at Pataligram which later developed into the imperial city of Pataliputra. Both Mahavir and Buddha died during his reign.

Udayan who succeeded Ajatasatru made Pataliputra his capital. His successors were weak and the last of them, Nagadaska, was



deposed by the nobles who placed Nandi Vardhana Saisunag, a popular governor, on the throne.

### **Saisunag dynasty**

Nandi Vardhana was the founder of Saisunag dynasty. He further extended the boundaries of Magadha and defeated the rulers of Avanti and under him Magadha became the most powerful State in Northern India. His successor, Kalasoka or Kalavarnin was murdered and as his sons were young, the throne was usurped by Maha Padma Nanda.

### **The Nanda dynasty**

Maha Padma Nanda, the founder of the Nanda dynasty, was of low caste. Some people say that he was the son of the last Saisunag king by a Sudra mother. Others believe that he was the son of a barber who somehow became the queen's favourite and murdered the king and his son and usurped the throne. He was a strong and powerful ruler and further extended the boundaries of Magadha by conquering Kosala and Kalinga. He was succeeded by his eight sons, the last being Dhana Nanda. He had a large army consisting of infantry, cavalry, chariots and war elephants. It was during his reign that Alexander the Great, invaded the Punjab.

Dhana Nanda did not treat his subjects well and was not a popular king on account of his low origin. There was widespread discontent against him. Chandragupta, a military leader, staged an unsuccessful coup against him and then fled to the Punjab. There he met a Taxilian Brahmana, named Chanakya or Kautilya who had been once insulted by the Nanda king. He was waiting for a suitable ally to take revenge upon the prince. He made an alliance with Chandragupta and with the help of the disaffected people defeated Dhana Nanda and overthrew the Nanda dynasty. Chandragupta founded a new dynasty known as the Maurya dynasty about which we shall read in detail later.

## **CONDITIONS OF SOCIETY, SIXTH CENTURY B.C. TO 324 B.C.**

### **Political conditions**

The kings became very powerful and were not regarded as ordinary men but venerated like gods. They were the protectors.

of society and Dharma. The Brahmanas supported them. On the occasion of the king's coronation a special anointing ceremony was performed by the Purohit who was the chief adviser to the king. The Brahmanas also established their supremacy because they alone could preside over the various sacrifices performed by the kings.

The kings lived in large palaces surrounded by a number of officers and servants. They were usually benevolent rulers who cared for the welfare of their subjects. They built roads and canals and helped people in establishing various industries. They also raised taxes because without them they could not meet the expenses of their State. The land revenue was paid by all 'Kisans'. It was fixed at one-sixth of the produce and was usually paid in kind.

### **Social conditions**

There was not much change in the structure of society from what it was in the later Vedic Age.

### **Economic conditions**

A large number of people still lived in villages though a few towns had also sprung up. Roads were constructed to connect the villages and towns in order to help the movement of people from village to village and also to help trade. Agriculture was pursued by a large majority of the people but industry also was encouraged. Each industry had its own guild or "Shreni" which looked after the supply of raw material and production. Metal work, carpentry and weaving were common industries.

### **Religious conditions**

A great change had come over the essentials of old Vedic religion. Temples were constructed and image worship became common. The old religious values of piety and good deeds had been replaced by sacrifices and complicated rites and rituals. There were many Sadhus or ascetics who denounced animal sacrifice and established their own orders to purify religion and to re-establish the old Vedic purity and simplicity. Two of these, Mahavir and Gautam Buddha, were the founders of new religions, namely, Jainism and Buddhism respectively, about which we shall read in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER VI

# JAINISM AND BUDDHISM

**I**N the early Vedic age religion was simple consisting mostly of singing hymns in praise of God and his manifestations. There were no temples, and idol worship was unknown. But by the Sixth Century B.C. it had become very complicated because of the introduction of sacrifices. Rites and rituals had replaced the old simple worship in daily life. The performing of sacrifice required the services of experts and since Brahmanas alone knew the procedure to be observed on such occasions, they became indispensable and established their supremacy over the other castes. Elaborate sacrifices and rites made religion mechanical and lifeless and at the same time rather expensive, tending to diminish the value of real piety and true religion.

Animal sacrifices shocked a large number of people who doubted their efficacy. They denounced this change in the old Vedic religion and revolted against it and the supremacy of the Brahmanas, who had begun to regard themselves superior to the Kshatriyas and who also oppressed Vaishyas and Sudras. A search was begun for a simpler religion which could lead man to the realisation of God and salvation.

In Eastern India this urge for religious reform produced a number of wandering monks or ascetics (Sadhus) many of whom were Kshatriyas. They were highly respected by the people for their simplicity and purity. They believed in the theory of 'Karma' and re-birth. A man kept on being re-born till by worship and penance he had freed himself from the bondage of life. Birth and suffering were inseparable. Any one born in this world was bound to suffer according to his deeds or 'Karma'. Therefore, one should control one's deeds and purify oneself by leading a pious and holy life. This alone could lead to salvation. Two such ascetics were Mahavir and



Gautam Buddha, the founders of Jainism and Buddhism respectively.

### **Jainism**

Jainism is the sum total of the teachings of 24 Tirthankars (Saints). Twenty-two of these were probably legendary figures who were supposed to have appeared at regular intervals. Parsvanath, a prince of Varanasi was the 23rd Tirthankar. He lived in the Eighth Century B.C. He renounced the world and founded an order of ascetics, his followers having to take four vows, namely, of non-injury to life, truthfulness, abstention from stealing and non-attachment to property.

### **Vardhman Mahavir**

He was the 24th Tirthankar, born in 599 B.C. at Kundagrama near Vaisali. He was the son of Siddhartha, the head of Kundagrama and Trisala, a Kshatriya princess through whom he was related to the ruling family of Magadha. He lived in the reign of Bimbisara and Ajatasatru. Deeply influenced by the suffering and sorrow he saw all around him, he began to search for ways and means to release man from them and renounced the world at the age of 30. He roamed about as a naked "Sadhu" performing severe penance and meditating for twelve years. At the age of 42 he attained "Supreme Knowledge" and was called "Jina", the conqueror of human ills. Consequently his followers were called "Jains" and his religion "Jainism". He travelled from place to place and preached his religion for about 30 years. He died at Pava (South Bihar) at the age of 72, about 527 B.C.

### **His teachings**

He believed in "Karma" and re-birth. As long as man was re-born, he was bound to suffer, therefore man must improve his deeds and avoid committing sins. In order to get release from re-birth he should lead a virtuous life. He enjoined upon his followers the three-fold path called the "Three Jewels" of Jainism. These were Right Faith, Right Knowledge and Right Action. Along with this he asked his followers to take vows of "Brahmacharya" or chastity and self-sacrifice. He also preached that people should give up the desire to possess

property and even advocated the discarding of clothes. He also preached "Ahimsa", i.e., people should not kill any living creature. Jainism was preached in the language of the people and not in Sanskrit, the language of the upper castes. The teachings of Jainism were compiled and their religious books were called the twelve Angas.

The main emphasis of Jainism is on leading a pious and virtuous life which will lead to 'moksha' or freedom from re-birth. Jainism places special emphasis on 'Ahimsa' or non-injury to living creatures and believes that even trees, vegetables and such like have a degree of consciousness. It also lays great stress on penance and renunciation of worldly pleasures. In course of time it spread throughout India, particularly in Rajasthan and Gujarat but because it enjoined upon its followers an austere life it was not accepted by as large a number of people as Buddhism and was, therefore, not a serious rival to Brahmanism.

By the First Century A.D. Jainism split into two sects called 'Swetambars' and 'Degambars'. The former wore white clothes while the latter discarded all garments. Jainism is still followed by a large number of people.

### **Buddhism**

Like Jainism, Buddhism also was a reaction to the complications which had been introduced in the old Vedic religion. It also aimed at simplicity of worship and insisted on leading a pious life. Its founder was Gautam Buddha, a contemporary of Mahavir.

### **Early life of Buddha**

His real name was Siddhartha. He was the son of Suddhodhan, the prince of Kapilavastu belonging to the Sakya clan. His mother's name was Maya. He was born in the Lumbini garden about 566 B.C. It is now in Nepal, not very far from the Indian border. His mother died shortly after his birth. According to the custom of the day, Suddhodhan consulted the astrologers about the future of the young child. They predicted that either he would be an emperor (Chakravarty Maharaja) or a great saint. The second prediction worried the father.

Siddhartha was a thoughtful child. Lest he might renounce the world, he was seldom allowed to go out of the palace so that



*Gautam Buddha (Gandhara Style)*

he would not see the sufferings of the people. On one occasion when he went out for a drive in his chariot through the city he saw an old man bent with age, sick people and a dead person. These sights made a deep impression on his mind and caused revulsion towards this world. He began to regard worldly pleasures as hollow. To divert his attention he was married at the early age of 16 to a beautiful princess named Yashodhara. They had a son named Rahul.

### **The Great Renunciation**

Even the love of a charming wife and the birth of a son could

not detract his mind from the sorrow and suffering which he saw all around him. At the age of 29 he renounced the world to find a way to end human sufferings and attain salvation.

For six years he wandered about as an ascetic, kept many fasts and practised rigid penance, but he still found no means to end sorrow. He then settled under a peepal tree (bodhi tree) at Bodh Gaya to meditate and contemplate. After years of meditation he attained supreme spiritual knowledge or enlightenment and was called the Buddha. He preached the new religion called Buddhism for 45 years and delivered his first sermon at Deer Park, Sarnath, near Varanasi. A large number of princes and people were converted by him. He died at the age of 80 at Kusinagar in Gorakhpur district, about 486 B.C.

### **His teachings**

He believed in re-birth and the theory of 'Karma'. Birth and

sufferings were inseparable. The root cause of all sorrows and sufferings was desire or craving. When desire was unfulfilled a man felt frustrated and became reckless and committed sin. Desire, therefore, must be controlled. He enunciated the four noble Truths of Buddhism, namely, (a) there is suffering in this world, (b) there is a cause for suffering, namely, desire, (c) suffering can be overcome and (d) there is a way to end suffering.

He called this way the Middle Path or the Eight-fold Path which consisted of the following : Right views, Right aspirations, Right speech, Right conduct, Right livelihood, Right effort, Right mindfulness and Right contemplation.

He denounced sacrifices, rites and rituals and also caste differences. He believed that if a man followed the Eight-fold Path he would succeed in controlling desire, avoid committing sin and attain Nirvan, namely freedom from re-birth.

In addition to the Eight-fold Path, he prescribed a moral code of conduct for his disciples and enjoined upon them 'Ten Commandments', namely : do not kill, do not steal, do not tell lies, do not drink, do not commit adultery, do not find faults, do not hate, do not invent evil reports about others, do not desire to possess, and do not be ignorant.

Buddhism laid much emphasis on leading a pious and simple life and doing service to others. In his teachings, the Buddha completely ignored the existence of God, the source of all creation.

### **Buddhist religious books**

His teachings were later compiled into three books called the "Tri-Pitakas" (three baskets), Satta Pitaka, Vinay Pitaka and Abhidam Pitaka. Satta Pitaka contains Buddha's sermons, Vinay Pitaka deals with the organisation of the Buddhist Sangh (church) and lays down rules and regulations for the conduct of Bhikshus (monks) and Bhikshnis (Nuns). Abhidam Pitaka contains Buddhist philosophy.

In addition to the Tri-Pitakas "Jatakas" are also regarded as sacred books. They deal with the legendary existence of the Buddha in his previous life before he attained Nirvan.

### **Causes of the rise of Buddhism**

Buddhism became extremely popular and for almost a



thousand years was the most dominant religion in India. It spread to several neighbouring countries also.

The following were the causes of its popularity. First, Buddha's Great Renunciation was a unique act of sacrifice. People were deeply influenced by it and admired his simplicity and purity.

Secondly, Buddhism was adopted by such rulers as Ashoka and Kanishka who spread it far and wide. In the days of monarchical government whatever the rulers did considerably influenced the nobles and commoners. When rulers adopted it, a very large number of people also did so.

Thirdly, it was a simple religion to follow. There were no rites, rituals or sacrifices. It emphasised good conduct which was more important than ceremonial sacrifices.

Fourthly, the message of the Buddha was carried to the different corners of India by a band of devoted and pious Sadhus known as Bhikshus. Their learning, simplicity and piety were admired and wherever they went people listened to them with attention, accepting what they said.

Fifthly, it was preached in the language of the people and not in Sanskrit and, therefore, it was easily understood by the common man. It made a direct appeal to the hearts of millions of people who gladly embraced it.

Sixthly, it did not recognise caste distinctions and believed in the equality of men. Even the Sudras saw hopes of achieving salvation by following Buddhism. In Brahmanism they were not allowed even to study religious scriptures.

The rapid expansion of Buddhism and its adoption by a vast majority of the people disturbed the Brahmanas, who began to think of ways and means to rehabilitate Brahmanism. Their efforts ultimately bore fruit.

### **Causes of the decline of Buddhism**

By about the Seventh Century A.D., Buddhism had begun to decline because of the following reasons:

First, the rise of the Rajputs was a predominant factor. Harsha was the last great patron of Buddhism. After his death political power passed into the hands of a new class of rulers known as the Rajputs. They were great hunters and did not believe in 'Ahimsa'. They followed Hinduism and when the

rulers revived this religion, a large number of their subjects also adopted it.

Secondly, Bhikshus and Bhikshnis, who had been the pillars of Buddhism in the past and who were responsible for preaching it far and wide, became corrupt and worldly-minded in the course of centuries. They gave up their old simplicity and piety and consequently lost their influence on the people as well.

Thirdly, under Kanishka, Buddhism had been divided into two sects, Hinayanas (lower vehicle) and Mahayanas (upper vehicle), as a result of the controversies among Buddhist Bhikshus. This division weakened its hold on the people. The Hinayanas continued to follow the old religion preached by the Buddha but the Mahayanas introduced idol worship and began to worship Buddha as a god and built temples in his honour. Thus the Mahayana form of Buddhism became very much like the idol worship in Hinduism. This was exploited by the Brahmanas to revive Brahmanism.

Fourthly, Shankaracharya, a great Hindu saint, played a very important part in the revival of Hinduism. He lived in the late Eighth and early Ninth Century A.D. He was a great Sanskrit scholar and an exponent of Hindu philosophy. He travelled all over the country preaching Hinduism. He was greatly respected for his scholarship and simplicity and succeeded in convincing people that Buddhism was not different from Hinduism and that the Buddha was also one of the 'Avatars' or incarnations of God. He died at the young age of 32. There are still four 'Maths' (Ashrams) in the name of Shankaracharya which continue to carry the message of the great saint of the Ninth Century.

Fifthly, invasions of the Huns in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries A.D. completely shook the people's faith in 'Ahimsa', the principal teaching of Buddhism. Under its influence they had neglected the art of warfare and of defending themselves against foreign invasions. The Huns were barbarians and caused much bloodshed when they invaded the country. People had to defend themselves against this slaughter and therefore a large number of them were re-converted to Brahmanism.

Buddhism ceased to be a dominant religion in India. Yet it is still followed by many people. It is also followed by several neighbouring countries such as Ceylon, Burma, Thailand.

## CHAPTER VII

### ALEXANDER'S INVASION : 326 B. C.

FOR centuries after the Aryan conquest, India had remained safe from foreign invasion, but from the Sixth to the Fourth Century B.C. north-western India was again invaded by two foreign powers, the Persians and then the Greeks.

#### Persian invasion

Cyrus the Great, Emperor of Persia from 558 B.C. to 530 B.C., was a powerful and ambitious ruler. He wanted to extend his empire and therefore led several successful campaigns into Afghanistan and Baluchistan. Thus his empire extended right up to the borders of India. He was a contemporary of Bimbisara.

Darius I, his son, who ruled from 522 B.C. to 486 B.C.; was a far more powerful ruler. He further extended the Persian empire, conquering parts of north-west India and annexing Gandhara and parts of the Indus valley.

His son Xerxes was the last great ruler of the Achaemenian dynasty. Many Indian soldiers had fought for him against the Greeks. After him the Persian empire began to break up and by the Fourth Century B.C. its influence had considerably diminished in India.

#### Alexander's invasion : 326 B.C.

The Greeks and Persians had often been at war with each other. When the Persian empire became weak the Greeks expanded their influence in the Middle East. India also fell a victim to the Greek invasion under Alexander.

#### His early life

Alexander, born in 356 B.C., was the son of King Philip of Macedonia (Greece). He received his education at the feet of

Aristotle, one of the greatest scholars and masters of all times. At the early age of 20, he became king.



*Alexander : Wall Painting from Pompei,  
a Roman City Ruined by a Volcanic Eruption.*

From his very childhood he was eager to conquer the whole world, so after his accession to the throne he led an expedition to the east with the object of conquering India. On the way he overran the whole of western Asia and also defeated Darius III (336-331 B.C.) the mighty ruler of Persia.

#### **Political conditions in India on the eve of Alexander's invasion**

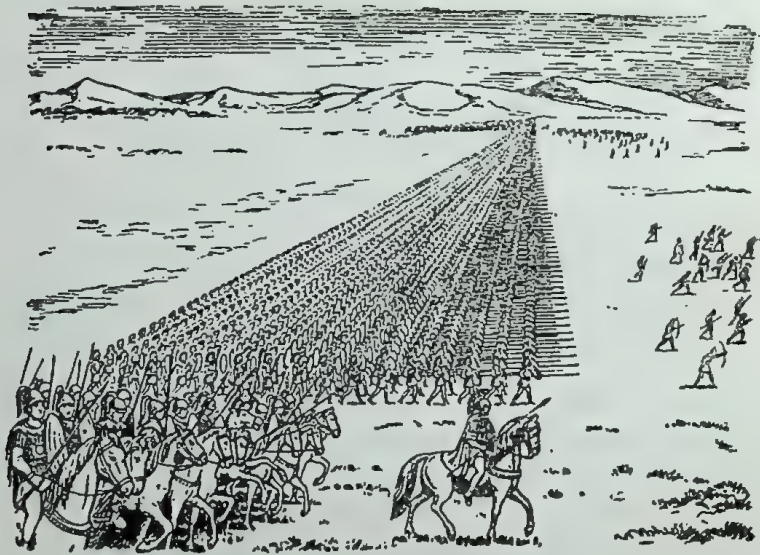
When Alexander appeared on the Indian border in 327 B.C., Punjab was hopelessly split into several small States, which were frequently at war with one another. Some of them were monarchical, others were tribal republics, the two most important States being Taxila (Takshashila) and Jhelum. Ambhi was the ruler of Taxila and his territory lay between the Indus and the Jhelum rivers. His immediate neighbour Porus (Paurava) was the ruler of the territory between the Jhelum and the Chenab. They were old rivals, having fought each other several times, each time Porus having defeated Ambhi. Ambhi therefore nursed a grudge against Porus and waited for a suitable opportunity to have his revenge on his enemy. Between the Beas and the Chenab were several small States. Beyond



the Beas extended the mighty State of Magadha, ruled by the Nanda Emperor.

### The Indian campaign

Political conditions in north-west India were ideal for an invader. No single State was strong enough to resist him; on account of the mutual rivalry and jealousy of the rulers, there was no possibility of an alliance of different States against him. Alexander crossed the Indus at Ohind, a little above the town of Attock, and entered the territory of Ambhi. Instead of resisting the invader, Ambhi welcomed him with open arms in the vain hope of wreaking his vengeance upon Porus with the help of the Greeks.



*Alexander's Army*

Alexander continued his advance and reached the right bank of the Jhelum. Porus, who had already heard of the advance of the Greek armies, was ready to give battle to Alexander. Porus stood on the opposite bank with his large army consisting of elephants, chariots and infantry. Alexander was a shrewd general. He knew it would not be possible to cross the river

in the face of the mighty force on the opposite bank. Therefore, he changed his strategy and on a stormy and dark night he moved 16 miles upstream and crossed the river at a convenient ford. Porus's son, who had been sent to stop the Greek advance, was beaten back. The next day there was a grim and fierce battle between Alexander and Porus on the Karri Plain. The Greek cavalry inflicted quick and severe blows and wounded the elephants of Porus which turned back and caused havoc in the ranks of the Indian Army by trampling a large number of them. Porus himself was wounded and captured. He was produced before Alexander who asked him how he should be treated. Porus bravely replied, "Like a king". Alexander was highly pleased with the fearless bravery of Porus and he not only set him free but also restored his kingdom to him. Ambhi who had all the time hoped to be rewarded was deeply annoyed at this.

### **Causes of Alexander's victory**

The following causes contributed to the victory of the Greeks over the Indian Army :

First, Alexander was a seasoned general. He had fought many successful battles in the Middle East. He had initiative, tact and qualities of leadership and could change his tactics according to the needs of the campaign. Secondly, the Greek cavalry moved much faster than the war elephants of Porus and thus they could shift from one sector of the battle to another very quickly. Thirdly, Porus's elephants caused havoc among his own army because when they were wounded they became mad and ran furiously, trampling a large number of soldiers. Fourthly, the Indians mainly depended upon their archers but as it had rained the previous night, the ground was too wet for the heavy bows to be used effectively,

### **Advance to the Beas**

Porus and Alexander became great friends. Alexander enjoyed the hospitality of Porus for a while and then proceeded eastwards. On the way he subdued several small States. His chief objective was to conquer Magadha which was the most powerful State in Northern India at this time. But at the river Beas, Greek soldiers refused to advance further because they were

tired of warfare. They had been fighting continuously for almost ten years, were also home-sick and wanted to go back soon to their wives and children. Perhaps they were also afraid of the mighty Nanda Army of Magadha. Already the small States in the Punjab had offered stiff resistance to the Greeks. They were not sure of their victory over the large Magadha Army.

Alexander had no option but to give orders for a retreat. The Greeks built 12 massive altars along the river Beas to mark the farthest extent of their advance into India. Alexander returned to Jhelum and once again enjoyed the hospitality of Porus. Then half of his army was sent by the land route and the other half, under him, sailed down the Indus in boats. In Sind he had to fight several ferocious tribes and against the Mallois or Malavas, he received a severe wound which never healed. The Greek Army reached the delta of the Indus. Then he divided his army, one party under him taking the land route while the other sailed along the Persian Gulf. The Greek Armies met at Babylon. Alexander was not destined to reach home alive and he died there in 323 B.C. at the young age of 32 following an attack of dysentery and the wound that he had received in Sind.

### **Effects and importance of his invasion**

The Greek invasion affected only the Punjab. The rest of India was not in the least influenced by it. Yet the Greek invasion was of great importance because of the following reasons :

First, it was the first invasion by a European country and it established contacts between India and the West. Secondly, it opened a way for trade between India and the western countries. Thirdly, the Greeks, who were experts in sculpture, influenced Indian art and as a result the Gandhara School of Art developed in India. Fourthly, the date of Alexander's invasion, namely 326 B.C., is the first accepted date in Indian history. All other dates in ancient Indian history are controversial. Fifthly, soldiers who settled in India served Indian princes and joined their armies. Sixthly, a new script called 'Kharoshthi' developed as a result of this contact. Seventhly, Buddhist missionaries went abroad and spread Buddhism there. Lastly, one indirect

result of the Greek invasion was the unification of the Punjab under Chandragupta Maurya. The small States of the Punjab had realised their weaknesses. They could not successfully resist foreign invaders and so did not offer much resistance to Chandragupta Maurya who made Punjab a part of his empire.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE MAURYAN EMPIRE : (324 B.C. - 184 B.C.)

#### CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA (324 B.C. to 297 B.C.)

**D**HANA Nanda, the last Nanda ruler of Magadha, was very unpopular because of his low origin and because he had annoyed his nobles and people. He was overthrown by Chandragupta Maurya, assisted by Chanakya, a Brahmana, and Chandragupta Maurya established the first empire in India. His dynasty ruled from 324 B.C. to 184 B.C.

#### His early life

There is a controversy about his birth. Some say that he was the son of a Nanda king by a Sudra woman named Mura after whom he founded the Mauryan dynasty. This theory is rejected by others who hold that he was a Kshatriya prince of the Maurya clan. Perhaps the second theory is more reasonable because Chanakya, a high caste Brahmana, could not possibly have allied himself with a low born individual.

Chandragupta was a capable soldier and a born leader. He rose to be the commander of the Nanda Army. He was ambitious and wanted to become king, so he plotted to overthrow the Nanda king but failed. He then fled to the Punjab. It was at this time that Alexander had invaded India. Chandragupta Maurya met him and studied the Greek tactics of warfare at close quarters.

While in the Punjab he met a Brahmana named Chanakya, or Kautilya, who had also been insulted once by the Nanda king and was therefore anxious to take revenge upon him. He and Chandragupta Maurya had a common cause, joined hands and hatched a plot to depose the Nanda ruler.

After Alexander's return Chandragupta made an alliance with the chiefs of Punjab and drove the Greeks out of India. With

their help he next invaded Magadha and defeated Dhana Nanda and proclaimed himself the ruler of Magadha.

### **Further conquests**

He was a warlike prince and wanted to expand his dominion. He waged several wars and gradually conquered the whole of Northern India including Malwa, Gujarat, Kathiawar, Sind and Punjab. Some historians say that he even conquered a large part of the Deccan.

### **Struggle with Seleukos : 305 B.C.**

The conquest of the Punjab brought him into conflict with Seleukos, the Greek satrap who had become master of the Greek dominions bordering India. Seleukos wanted to conquer India, to achieve what his master Alexander had failed to do. Therefore he invaded India in 305 B.C. but was decisively defeated by Chandragupta Maurya. He had to give a large part of his dominions to the Indian ruler; this included the provinces of Kabul, Kandhar and Herat. He also gave his daughter in marriage to Chandragupta Maurya who presented five hundred elephants to his father-in-law. Seleukos also sent Magasthenes as his ambassador to the Mauryan court. He wrote a detailed account of the conditions in India under Chandragupta Maurya.

A Jain tradition says that Chandragupta became a Jain and starved himself to death, according to a Jain custom.

### **The Mauryan administration**

Our chief sources of information about the reign of Chandragupta Maurya are the account of Magasthenes and Kautilya's "Arthshastra", a book on the art of government. From both these sources we learn that the Mauryan administration was very well organised and that the king ruled for the welfare of the people.

### **Central government—the king**

The emperor enjoyed vast powers but he was not a despot, respecting the traditional laws of the country and those made by local bodies and guilds. He looked upon his subjects as his children and ruled for their welfare. According to "Arthshastra",

“Whatever pleases himself, the king shall not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects, he shall consider as good”.

The king led his army in battle, was the fountain of justice, appointed his ministers and other high officials and issued rules and regulations. It was his duty to protect the country from foreign invasion, maintain law and order and promote agriculture and industry.

In performing these duties, he was assisted by a Council of Ministers or “Mantri Parishad” whose members were appointed by him and were responsible to him. They worked under his directions. He consulted them in the affairs of the State but was not bound by their advice. They looked after one or more departments of the administration. The more important ministers were Mantrin (Chief Minister), Purohit (High Priest), Yuv Raj (Heir) and Senapati (Commander-in-Chief). A number of officials worked under them. The chief officials were known as “Mahamatras”, “Rajukas”, “Yuktas”, etc.

### **Chief sources of income**

The king had to raise a number of taxes to meet the expenses of administration. He had to maintain an army, look after the administration in the country and promote trade and industry. For all this he needed money, which he raised in the form of taxes but they were limited. The chief source of income was the land revenue which varied from  $1/6$ th to  $1/4$ th of the produce. In addition the king levied customs and excise duties, irrigation tax and such like. The people, however, were not over-burdened with taxes and lived a happy life.

### **Administration of justice**

The king was the highest judge and decided important cases. Under him were a number of judicial officials but the system of trial was crude and torture was often inflicted on the alleged culprit. Local customs and traditions formed the basis of trial. Punishments were very severe, hence crime was rare. Common punishments were death, exile, mutilation and fines. Special protection was given to artisans or skilled workers who were responsible for industrial prosperity in the country. If they were the victims of crime, punishments were all the more severe.

**Military administration**

Chandragupta Maurya had conquered a big empire with the help of a large army which consisted of 600,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 9,000 war elephants, 8,000 war chariots and a navy which patrolled the rivers and the coastline. The administration of the army was entrusted to a council consisting of 30 members. They planned campaigns and laid down broad policies. They were divided into six boards of five members each to supervise intensive training and detailed administration of the six branches of the armed forces, namely: infantry, cavalry, elephants, chariots, navy, supply and transport. Spears, swords and bows and arrows were the chief weapons. Soldiers were also equipped with shields and helmets and were given proper training in warfare. The king and nobles fought from elephants or chariots.

**Provincial government**

The empire was divided into provinces which were further sub-divided into districts and villages. Viceroys or governors were appointed to administer provinces. They were usually princes or high nobles and wielded vast powers. Lest they might rebel, the king kept a strict watch on their activities through a number of secret reporters. Each district had several officials. The village headman or "Gramika" looked after the affairs of a village.

**Municipal administration**

Chandragupta Maurya had established a very efficient municipal administration. Big cities such as Pataliputra, Ujjain and Taxila had municipal committees, each consisting of 30 members who were responsible for the local administration. It was divided into six boards of five members each for detailed administration.

One board was in charge of industries, handicrafts and commerce and supervised industrial production. The second controlled sales of manufactured articles and tested weights and measures. The third board looked after the activities and comforts of foreigners. After the Greek invasions, a number of them had settled in the empire. The fourth board was the Census Board which maintained a record of births and deaths.



The fifth was responsible for sanitation and the sixth collected taxes.

Thus we notice that practically all aspects of urban life were very well looked after in the reign of Chandragupta Maurya.

### **Works of public welfare**

Roads were built, trees planted on either side and inns (sarais) built at regular intervals for the comfort of travellers.

Canals were constructed to irrigate agricultural land. In Junagadh (Kathiawar), the famous Sudershan lake was constructed by the damming of a mountain stream by Pushyagupta, the provincial governor. In Asoka's reign supplemental channels were provided to this lake.

### **Pataliputra and life at the court**

Pataliputra, the capital, was a magnificent city situated at the confluence of the Ganges and the Sone. It was about 14 kilometres (nine miles) long and three kilometres (two miles) broad. The city was surrounded by a wall made of wood with 64 gates and 570 watch towers. A deep moat filled with water ran around it. The king's palace was in the centre of the city and was built mainly of timber and stone. It was tastefully decorated with fountains, fish ponds and ornamented pillars and had a large number of gold and silver vessels. The king was fond of pomp and splendour. He was surrounded by an army of servants and travelled either in palanquins or on elephants. His birthday was celebrated with great rejoicing and nobles offered gifts to him on the occasion. He followed the Persian practice of hair washing on his birthday.

An elaborate security system was introduced in the palace lest the king might fall a victim to an assassin's dagger. He was protected by a bodyguard consisting of armed women. For personal safety, he seldom slept in any particular bedroom at night, often changing it. The chief amusements were hunting, chariot racing and bird and animal fights.

### **An estimate of Chandragupta Maurya**

He was the first Indian ruler who tried to unify the country under his banner and laid the foundation of an empire. He set up an elaborate and efficient system of government based on

the welfare of the people. He maintained peace and order and encouraged trade and industry. As punishments were very severe, he ensured that crime was rare and that the people lived in safety. He was a great warrior and not only conquered large parts of India but also defeated and drove out the Greek invaders from Indian soil.

**Bindusara: (297 B.C.—273 B.C.)**

Chandragupta Maurya was succeeded by his son Bindusara. We know very little about his reign except that he suppressed a rebellion in Taxila. The administration continued as it was in the reign of his father. Probably he conquered the Deccan. He was succeeded by his son Asoka, one of the greatest rulers of the world.

## CHAPTER IX

# ASOKA, THE ROYAL MONK : (273 B.C—232B.C)

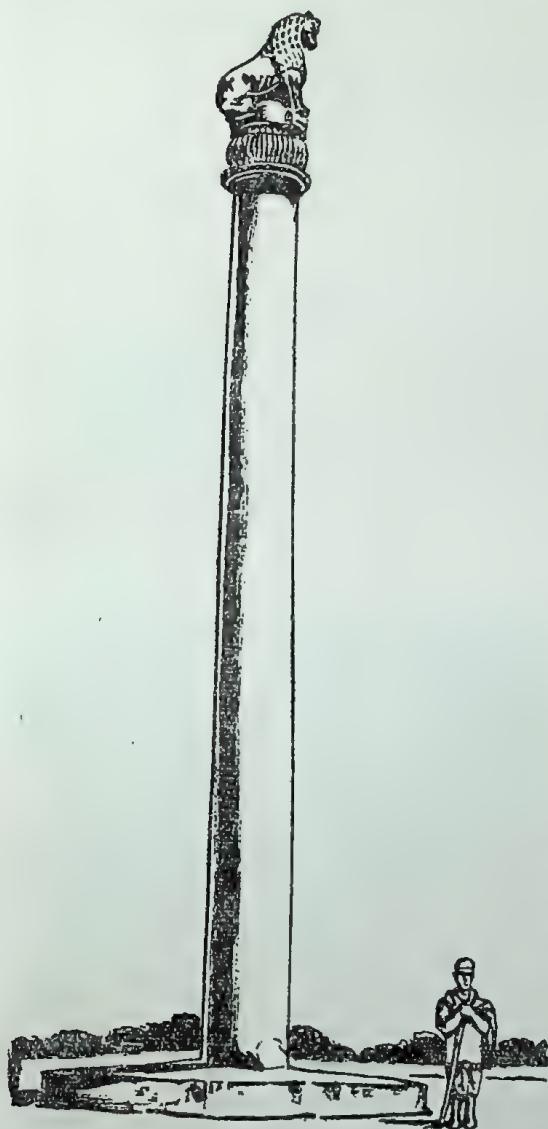
### Early life

**D**URING the reign of Bindusara, his son, Asoka had been viceroy of Ujjain and Taxila, receiving training in the art of administration.

He succeeded his father in 273 B.C. but his coronation took place only four years later in 269 B.C. Perhaps during this period there was a civil war among the brothers. Asoka was finally victorious and ascended the throne. It is said that he killed 99 brothers in this war. This is probably untrue because we learn from his edicts that some of his brothers were alive during his reign and that he issued special instructions to his officers to look after them and their families.

### The Kalinga War (262 B.C.)

Like his grandfather, Asoka also was an imperialist in the beginning, wanting to extend his empire. Kalinga, part of modern Orissa, was still independent. Asoka invaded it in 262 B.C. and conquered it. In the war there was terrible bloodshed and thousands of people were killed, many women becoming widows and children orphans. This victory should have pleased Asoka but his heart melted with pity at the sight of the dead and the dying and on hearing the cries of widows and orphans. He was deeply moved by the misery and sorrow and filled with anguish and repentance. He did not know how to atone for the sins he had committed and was extremely sad. While in this sorrowful state of mind he met Upagupta, a learned Buddhist monk, who told him that only by following Buddha's teachings he would be able to wash off the sin of causing so much suffering and unhappiness. Upagupta convinced the ruler by his logic and philosophy that Buddhism was



*Asoka Pillar, Nandan Garh  
(Distt. Champaran, Bihar)*

the only cure for his mental state and under the monk's influence Asoka was converted to it.

The Kalinga war was the turning point in the life of Asoka. Thereafter, he sheathed the sword and vowed not to wage any more wars nor shed any more blood. He also gave up hunting, shooting and eating meat, devoting his life instead to spread Buddhism and conquer the hearts of the people by propagating the 'Law of Piety'. In future it was to be all 'Dharma Vijaya', or conquest by piety.

Though Asoka accepted Buddhism he allowed the people complete freedom of worship. He was

just to all his subjects; followers of Brahmanism and Jainism were not persecuted.



### How he spread Buddhism

Asoka was an ardent Buddhist and with the zeal of a missionary spread Buddhism far and wide, transforming it from a mere Indian religion into a world religion.

#### I. In India

He adopted the following ways and means of propagating Buddhism in India.

##### (a) Personal example

"Example is better than precept" was his motto. He became a true disciple of the Buddha and was popularly known as the "Royal Monk". He discarded pomp and led a life of simplicity, sincerity and piety. These were greatly admired by a large number of nobles and people, many of them being converted to Buddhism.

##### (b) Royal tours

He undertook a tour of all the holy places associated with Buddha. He went to Lumbini Gardens (Buddha's birthplace), Gaya, where he attained enlightenment, Sarnath, where he delivered his first sermon, and Kusinagar, where he died, exhorting people to follow the Law of Piety. But he could not completely neglect the affairs of the State and so it was not possible for him to continue the tours. Therefore he sent his officials, known as Dharma Mahamatras, Rajukas and Pradeshikas, to all parts of the empire to continue his mission. Under their influence many more people were converted.

##### (c) Edicts

He issued a number of edicts or laws, which were inscribed on rocks and pillars and known as rock and pillar edicts. Their language was Prakrit

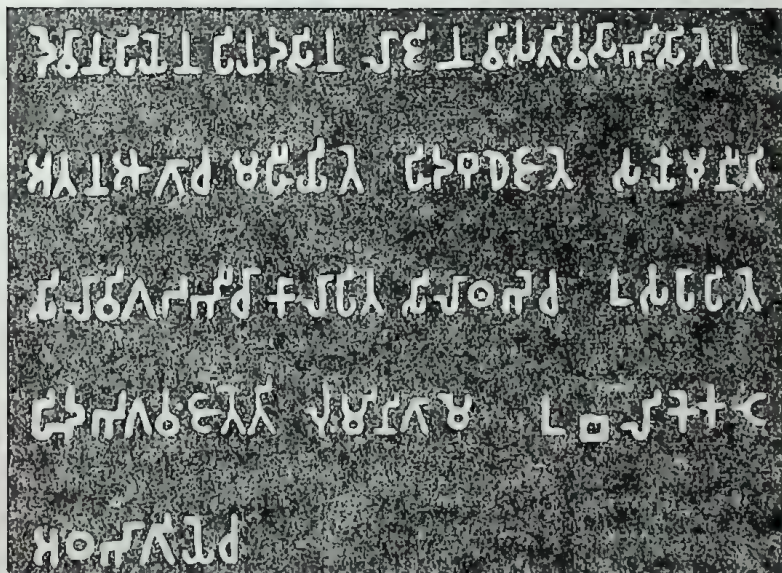


*Top of Asoka Pillar at Sarnath which is now our National Emblem.*

but the script was Brahmi. These were installed all over his empire, particularly near centres of pilgrimage so that a large number of people could read them. These inscriptions comprised his Dhamma (Law of Piety) based on the teachings of Buddha. They also contained his instructions to officials and important events of his reign.

#### (d) Monasteries

He built a number of monasteries or vihars in which the Bhikshus lived. These were centres of Buddhist learning where the learned and pious Bhikshus held classes for young children. They were highly respected by the people. Most of the year they toured from place to place preaching Buddhism with a missionary zeal. During the monsoon season when travelling was not possible, they devoted their time to copying Buddhist scriptures, because the art of printing was unknown. Their influence was so great that a large number of people were converted to Buddhism.



*Inscription on Rukmindei's Ashoka Pillar in Brahmi Script  
which is Read from Left to Right*

A large number of vihars were constructed in Magadha, which

began to be called Vihar, later corrupted into Bihar. In addition he built many stupas over the relics of Buddha. The stupa at Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh is the most famous.

#### (e) The third Buddhist council

Whenever differences arose over the interpretation of Buddhist teachings, the Buddhist Bhikshus held a council to remove them. Two such councils had already been held. At the third council convened by Asoka at Pataliputra, the differences which were likely to confuse the people were finally removed.

### II. Outside India

Side by side with the propagation of Buddhism in India, Asoka sent a number of missions to foreign countries to carry the message of Buddha. His envoys went to Greece, Syria, Bactria, Gandhara, South India, Ceylon, Burma and Sumatra. His own son Mohindra and daughter Sanghamitra (some say they were his brother and sister) led the mission to Ceylon where they succeeded in converting Devanampiya Tissa, the Ceylonese king, and a large number of his subjects. All these missions were successful in spreading Buddhism beyond the borders of India.

#### Asoka's Dhamma

He wanted the people to live a virtuous life and exhorted them to live in peace. He told them to love not only their fellowmen but also animals and birds. He opened hospitals for animals and birds. Based on the teachings of Buddha, he formulated a religious scheme called "Dhamma" or the Law of Piety. ("Dhamma" is a Prakrit form of the Sanskrit word "Dharma".) He inscribed the chief features of his "Dhamma" on rocks and pillars, some of which are mentioned below ;

Obey your parents; respect your teachers and elders; be kind to animals, don't kill them; always speak the truth; lead a moral life to achieve happiness; and be gentle to servants and slaves.

Since he wanted to explain his high ideals to the ordinary people, these inscriptions were written in Prakrit, which was the language of the common man and was easily understood.

**Asoka's character : his place in history**

Asoka was a remarkable emperor, ruling over a vast empire not by sword but by love. He had tireless energy in promoting the spiritual and moral uplift of his people, whom he called his children. He abandoned warfare, not after a defeat but after a victory, and preached the virtues of toleration and non-violence. He was generous and sincere and always had the welfare of his subjects at heart. He built hospitals for men and animals and distributed large sums of money in charity. He made roads, dug wells and planted trees for their benefit. He preached the gospel of peace and set a good example. Never before or after him did a king rule over such a large empire without using force. H.G. Wells, the eminent historian, scientist and philosopher, has paid him a tribute in the following words:

“Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, the name of Asoka shines almost alone, a star. From the Volga to Japan his name is still honoured. China and even India, though it has left his doctrine, preserve the tradition of his greatness. More living men cherish his memory today than have ever heard the name of Constantine or Charlemagne.”

**Successors of Asoka—later Mauryas**

After his death the Mauryan Empire began to break up. Very little is known about his successors. His empire was partitioned between his son and grandsons. The last ruler of the dynasty was Brihadratha, who was murdered by Pushyamitra Sanga, his commander-in-chief, about 184 B.C., in the presence of his army.



## CHAPTER X

### CONDITION OF SOCIETY UNDER THE MAURYAN EMPIRE (324 B.C.—184 B.C.)

**T**HE rise of Jainism and Buddhism, the invasion of the Persians and the Greeks, and the political ambitions of the rulers of Magadha brought about vast changes in the structure of Vedic society and the political, economic and religious set-up.

#### **Political conditions :**

##### **From tribal States to an Empire**

Before the accession of Chandragupta Maurya to the throne of Magadha, India was politically divided into a number of tribal States. No single State was strong enough to claim suzerainty over the other States. Such political conditions were ideal to encourage foreign invasions. In Chapter VII we have read how Alexander succeeded in defeating, one by one, the small States of the Punjab. After his return, Chandragupta Maurya, with the help of Chanakya, conquered the Punjab and expelled the Greeks. Then he turned his attention to Magadha and overthrew the tyrannical rule of the Nanda king. Gradually he extended his territories and conquered the whole of Northern India, parts of Afghanistan and Baluchistan. His son Bindusara and grandson Asoka further added the Deccan and Kalinga respectively to the Mauryan dominions. Thus the Mauryas established the first empire in India which extended from the Hindu Kush to the river Krishna in the south.

##### **Ideal of kingship**

The Mauryan emperors wielded large powers but they were not absolute despots. They were bound by the ancient laws written in the Shastras and also respected the rules laid down by different corporations and guilds which controlled industry. The ideal before them was the welfare of the people. They

called themselves "beloved of the gods". Asoka took the title of "Devanam Piya" and treated his subjects as his children. His Dhamma aimed at the establishment of a moral State.

The old institutions of 'Sabha' and 'Samiti' had lost their authority. In Chapter VIII we have already studied about the Mauryan administration in outline. The only difference that Asoka introduced in the administrative set-up was that he neglected the army because he renounced warfare.

### **Social conditions :**

#### **Castes and occupations**

The old Vedic caste system was gradually breaking up. The rise of Jainism and Buddhism was a great set-back to the supremacy of the Brahmanas and their influence also diminished because sacrifices were on the decline and their expert services were no longer required in performing them. Consequently a large number of Brahmanas changed their occupation and took to industry and trade.

Under Asoka, Buddhism was the State religion and warfare was completely renounced. The Kshatriyas also had to look to other professions such as industry and trade. Occupations tended to become hereditary. Both Jainism and Buddhism laid great emphasis on monastic life and there grew an order of both Jain and Buddhist monks who led a simple and saintly life. They were greatly respected in society.

#### **Position of women**

Though women still participated in religious activities they did not occupy the same high position as they did in Vedic times because polygamy among rulers and nobles was very common. This institution undermined their prestige. Slavery was well established and buying and selling of women seemed to be quite common. Women were often employed as bodyguards for kings.

People were generally honest, gentle, mild and trustworthy. Thefts were rare and houses were left unlocked or unguarded. As a rule people did not go to law courts to settle their disputes.

### **Amusements and games**

By and large people lived a gay and happy life. Dancing, singing, instrumental music, wrestling and chariot racing were their popular amusements. Fights between men and animals were forbidden under Asoka as they tended to become bloody.

### **Economic conditions**

Agriculture continued to be the occupation of a majority of the people. Land was usually divided into three parts, cultivable land, pastures and forests. The kings made arrangements for irrigation and built dams and canals and well-irrigation was common. The Kisans lived a happy life in normal times and were fairly prosperous. In times of famine and other calamities the rulers granted relief to them in the form of free food and seeds. They paid land revenue to the king.

Hunters cleared the land of wild birds and animals which were likely to damage crops.

Trade and industry were patronised by rulers and nobles. The State regulated industry, fixed prices and controlled weights and measures. Each industry had a guild or corporation which looked after its affairs. At Pataliputra, there was a municipal board to supervise industrial production and safeguard the interests of artisans. Carpentry, weaving and pottery were the most popular industries. A large number of women were employed in the weaving industry. Cotton and silken cloth in various designs inlaid with gold and silver was produced. Indian muslin was exported to Rome and other western countries. Foreign trade brought in much wealth and enriched the traders and industrialists.

### **Religion**

Brahmanism was on the decline and sacrifices no longer common. Among its followers there arose the cult of Shiva and Vishnu and their worship replaced the worship of the old Vedic gods, i.e., Varun, Indra, Agni and others. Buddhism and Jainism became very popular and were adopted by Kshatriya rulers and a large majority of the people. Under Asoka, Buddhism spread rapidly not only in India but to neighbouring countries also and became a world religion. The adoption of a particular religion by the rulers did not lead to

persecution or forced conversion. There was perfect freedom of worship to followers of all religions.

### Art

The Mauryan emperors were great builders. They built several stupas, pillars and caves. Stupas were constructed over the relics of the Buddha and his disciples. Among them the stupa at Sanchi built by Asoka is the most famous. Pillars were made of sand stone and were well polished. On the top of the pillars there were lions or other animals. The Asoka Pillar at Sarnath, with lions on top, has been adopted by our Government, after independence, as the national emblem of India. The Mauryan palaces were grand and beautifully decorated. They were largely made of wood and have disappeared with the ravages of time.



## CHAPTER XI

### FOREIGN INVASIONS : 184 B.C.—300 A.D.

**W**ITHIN 50 years of the death of Asoka, the Mauryan Empire broke up because of the following reasons:

#### **Weak successors**

Asoka's successors were weak and inefficient and could not administer the vast Mauryan Empire. It was divided among his sons and grandsons and not one of them was strong enough to enforce his over-lordship over the others.

#### **Empire too big**

The Mauryan Empire had become too extensive to be controlled by a single central authority, particularly when this happened to be weak. The means of communication were poor and it was not possible to maintain contact with the far-flung areas, set up an efficient administrative machinery or collect taxes regularly.

#### **Army neglected**

Chandragupta Maurya had built up a large empire whose strength and solidarity depended upon the mighty Mauryan army. When Asoka adopted Buddhism and renounced warfare after the Kalinga war the army was completely neglected. Asoka held the empire together because he had won the hearts of his people. He did not require the use of force to maintain law and order but his weak successors could not maintain its unity without an efficient army.

#### **Foreign invasions**

Militarily weak the Mauryan Empire provided a welcome opportunity to foreigners to invade India once again. From the Second Century B.C. onward India was invaded by a

number of foreigners including the Indo-Greeks, Parthians, Sakas and Kushans. These invasions hastened the downfall of the Mauryan Empire.

### **Political history : 184 B.C.—300 A.D.**

It will be convenient to study the political history of India from 184 B.C. to 300 A.D. in three sections, namely, the Deccan Plateau, South India and North India.

## **SECTION A : DECCAN PLATEAU**

### **Satvahana or Andhra Empire**

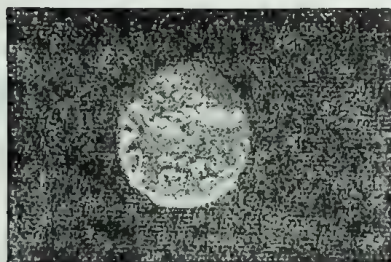
So far we have read only about the history of Northern India. We shall now study the situation in the Deccan Plateau. It was inhabited by the Dravidian people. On the decline of the Mauryan empire, Simuka Satvahana established an independent kingdom in Maharashtra. He was a Brahmana, therefore, under him Brahmanism was revived. He was succeeded by Krishna, about whom not much is known. Satkarni, the third king of the dynasty, was a great conqueror. He overran Malwa and also defeated Kharavela, the king of Kalinga. He was perhaps a contemporary of Pushyamitra Sanga, the king of Magadha.

There was a bitter struggle between Satvahanas and the Saka rulers of Saurashtra. Gautmiputra Satkarni, the great Satvahana ruler, defeated the Sakas and reconquered western Deccan. His son Vasisthiputra also repelled the Sakas and married the daughter of Rudradaman, the Saka king. By the Second Century A.D. the Sakas had become weak and the Satvahanas extended their dominion up to Kathiawar.

Yajna Shri Satkarni was the last great Satvahana ruler. He ruled from A.D. 165 to 194. After him the Satvahana empire began to decline, because of the following causes : First, the long and bitter struggle with the Sakas weakened the Satvahana empire and completely impoverished it. Secondly, the provincial governors were faithless and defied the central authority when it became weak and later declared their independence. By the middle of the Third Century A.D., the Satvahana empire was divided among various tribes including the Nagas, Chutus and Pallavas.

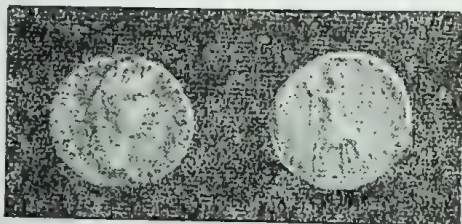
### Achievements of the Satvahanas

The Satvahanas were great rulers. They built a powerful and prosperous State south of the Vindhya. They cleared the forests, built roads and improved means of communication, making travelling safe for the people. They encouraged trade and industry and were responsible for the growth of several towns. Trade with foreign countries—Persia, Iraq and Arabia in the West and Burma and



*'Potein' coin of King Satvahan. On the lower part of it there is an elephant and on the upper is written 'Satkanis' in Brahmanism script.*

Malaya in the South—made people rich. They developed a number of ports and built a powerful navy. They revived Brahmanism as the State religion.



*Coin of Roman Emperor Tiberius (1437 A.D.) from Chandravalli (Karnatak)*

### SECTION B : SOUTH INDIA

Beyond the empire of the Satvahanas there were three kingdoms in the extreme south : (1) The *Cholas* ruled in Tamil Nadu, comprising the present Tanjore and Trichinopoly districts. They were adventurous people. They had a strong navy and attacked Ceylon also; (2) The *Pandya*s ruled in Madurai. They were a great maritime nation and carried on trade with foreign countries. An ambassador was sent to the Roman emperor Augustus by one of their rulers, and (3) The *Cheras* or *Keralas* held sway over the Malabar coast and like the other two also set up a maritime State.

All these three States were frequently at war with one another. In spite of this they carried on a very lucrative trade

with Rome in the West and other countries in South East Asia. They traded in spices, textiles, pearls and other precious stones and were prosperous States.

They also encouraged literature. Poets and bards met at Madurai in three sessions. They collected poems and compiled eight books. This literature is called the Shangam literature and describes the deeds of valour of the chiefs of these states.

### SECTION C : NORTHERN INDIA

On the break up of the Mauryan Empire several States sprang up in Northern India. The remnants of the empire was still called Magadha. In the north-west, foreigners found a suitable climate for invading India once again and thus the Indo-Greeks, Sakas, Parthians and Kushans invaded India. (We shall study the fortunes of this region in the following pages).

#### Magadha

After the downfall of the Mauryan Empire, two Brahmana dynasties, namely, the Sungas and Kanavas, ruled over Magadha.

#### (a) The Sunga Dynasty : 183 B.C.—75 B.C.

Brihadratha, the last Mauryan emperor, was murdered by Pushyamitra Sunga, his commander-in-chief in 184 B.C. in the presence of the army and the people. No one raised even a little finger to save the emperor because he was tyrannical and a very incompetent ruler. People despised him because he failed to stop the Greek invasions.

Pushyamitra was a Brahmana. He was a strong ruler and waged wars against the neighbours in the south and against the Indo-Greeks or "Yavans" who had invaded north-west India.

He defeated the "Satvahanas" who were compelled into obedience by his generals.

Next he turned his attention to the foreign invaders and his armies, under the command of his grandson Vasumitra, repelled the Greeks. Some people say that the leader of the Greeks was the King Menander, who had established his sway in the north-west.

To celebrate his victory over the "Satvahanas" and the Indo-





*Stone-Idol of Yakshi from Didar-ganj (Bihar)—height 160 cm.*

Greeks, he performed two "Ashwamedh Yagas", or horse sacrifice according to Vedic rites. These yagyas had a double significance. First, they marked the revival of Brahmanism. This was accepted by the rulers and under their patronage a large number of people also began to follow Brahmanism. Consequently for some time Buddhism was on the decline. Secondly, the yagas signified the rise of a new empire which was successful in not only containing the invasion of the Indo-Greeks but also of defeating them and forcing them to withdraw.

Pushyamitra was succeeded by his son Agnimitra and grandson Vasumitra. Under them the struggle against the Indo-Greeks in the north-west and Satvahanas in the south continued. These wars weakened the Sungas and in 75 B.C. Dev Bhuti, the last Sunga king, was murdered by Vasu Deva Kanava, the Brahman minister, and the Sunga dynasty came to an end.

**(b) The Kanava Dynasty : (75 B.C. to 27 B.C.)**

Vasu Deva Kanava, a Brahmana, founded a new dynasty. He was succeeded by three more kings of whose achievements very little is known. About 27 B.C. the Kanava kingdom was overthrown by the Satvahanas of the Deccan.

**North-west India : Foreign invasions :**

After the break up of the Mauryan Empire, there was not a single strong and powerful kingdom in Northern India to stop foreign invasions. The Sungas temporarily checked the invasions of the Indo-Greeks but after they had been overthrown, India was again invaded by several foreign tribes and races such as the Indo-Greeks, Parthians, Sakas and Kushans.

**The Indo-Greeks or 'Yavans'**

After Alexander's death his eastern empire was divided among his generals and Seleukos became ruler of the Syrian Empire.

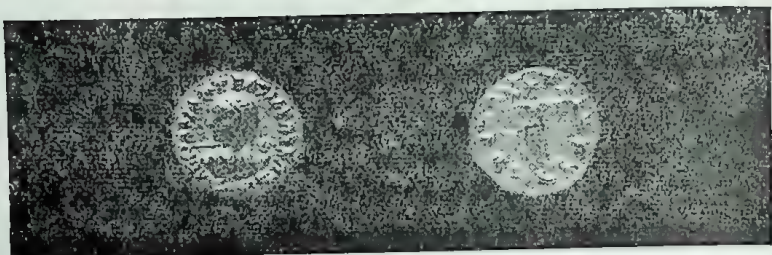


*The face of Dimitri, the Hind Yawan administrator engraved on his coin. He is wearing a crown with elephant's trunk and tusks.*

In Chapter VIII we have read how he tried to conquer India and invaded it in 305 B.C. and how he was defeated by Chandragupta Maurya. After some time the Syrian rulers became weak and their empire began to break up. Bactria and Parthia, two important satrapies (provinces) seceded from it.

The Indo-Greeks of Bactria and Parthia invaded India on the decline of the Mauryan Empire.

Demetrios, son of Euthydemos, king of Bactria, conquered parts of Kabul valley and Punjab adjoining Sialkot. Another ruler Menander, who was probably a contemporary of Pushyamitra Sunga, was the greatest ruler of this house. He ruled at Sialkot and expanded his dominion further east but was defeated by the Sunga army led by Vasumitra, grandson of Pushyamitra.



*Silver coin of Hind-Yavan Administrator Minandar (IIInd B.C.). On one side is King's headless body and Unani inscription, whereas on the other, there is Pallas, the Unani Goddess, and inscription in Kharosthi which reads 'महरजस ततरस मेन्द्रस'*

Another rival branch of the Indo-Greeks, belonging to the house of Eukratides, established its rule in western Punjab in the region of Taxila.

Frequent struggles between the descendants of the two rival Greek houses—descendants of Euthydemus and Eukratides—considerably weakened them and finally they were defeated by the Parthians and Sakas.

Many of these Indo-Greek kings and their nobles became Indianised in course of time and adopted Buddhism or Brahmanism.

### **Invasions of Parthians, Sakas and Kushans**

The Indo-Greeks in turn were defeated by the Parthians, Sakas and Yueh Chis. About the Second Century B.C. there was a great political upheaval in Central Asia. It is sometimes called the "Westward Drift". The Yueh Chis, better known as the Kushans, were driven from their ancestral homes in Central Asia to the west by the Chinese. They in turn defeated the Sakas, their neighbours, and moved towards India.

In the process of these invasions, the Parthians, Sakas and Kushans came into India.

### **The Parthians**

The Parthians were already settled in north-west India and one of their great rulers, Mithridates I ruled from 171 B.C. to 138 B.C. He defeated the Indo-Greeks and established Parthian supremacy in the Indus valley and Punjab. One of his successors, Gondophernes, was the most famous Parthian

ruler. He conquered a fairly large empire which included southern Afghanistan and parts of Gandhara. During his reign, it is said, the Christian apostle St. Thomas preached the gospel of Christ. Both Gondophernes and his brother Gad were probably converted to Christianity. After his death his empire was split into a number of small States which were finally overthrown by the Kushans.

### The Sakas or Scythians

The Sakas had their original home in Central Asia, beyond the river Amu. In the Second Century B.C. they were forced to leave their homes by the Yueh Chis. The Sakas moved towards India and in the course of their expansion fought against the Indo-Greeks and the Parthians. The history of north-west India in the First Century B.C. is rather complex because both the Sakas and Parthians struggled for mastery in this region. Gradually the Sakas extended their dominions to Malwa and Kathiawar. Their early great rulers were Maues or Moga and Azes I and Azes II.

After Azes I, Gondophernes, the Parthian chief, gained supremacy of the Indian borderland.

The Saka-Parthian empire was divided into several provinces whose governors were called Satraps. The Saka tribes of western India and Ujjain were frequently at war with the Satvahana empire of the Deccan. Another branch of the Sakas ruled over western India under their great leader Nahapana. They defeated the early Satvahana kings and extended their sway over upper Deccan also. Finally, they were defeated and overthrown by Gautamiputra Satkarni, the Satvahana ruler.

Chashtana, another Saka satrap of Ujjain, was a powerful chief. His grandson, Rudradaman, who ruled from about 130 A.D. to 150 A.D. was one of the greatest Saka rulers. He waged constant wars against the Satvahanas and though on one occasion he was defeated and had to give his daughter in marriage to Vashisthiputra, the Satvahana ruler, yet in spite of this matrimonial alliance, he continued to fight against his son-in-law and extended his rule up to the Konkan. His successors were weak and because of internal strife the satrapy declined. In the Fourth Century A.D. Samudragupta and Chandragupta



Vikramaditya, the great Gupta rulers, wiped out Saka rule in western India and Kathiawar.

### **Yueh Chis or Kushans**

The Yueh Chis were nomadic people, defeated and driven from their home in Chinese Turkestan by the Han dynasty of China in the Second Century B.C. They settled in the Oxus valley, establishing five principalities. These were united under the leadership of Kadphises I, head of the Kushan clan. By the First Century A.D., the Parthian Empire in southern Afghanistan and Gandhara (Peshawar district) had become weak. The Kushans were not slow to take advantage of this and invaded and conquered Afghanistan and Gandhara under Kadphises I.

### **His successors**

Kadphises II, also known as Vima Kadphises, further extended his dominion into western Punjab by defeating several Saka satraps. It is believed that he was converted to Brahmanism and became a follower of 'Shivism'. He issued gold coins which signified that the kingdom was rich and prosperous. He was succeeded by Kanishka.

### **Kanishka**

He was the most famous ruler of the Kushan dynasty and further extended the Kushan Empire, conquering Kashmir, the Punjab, Rajputana, Sind and the Gangetic valley upto Benaras. Purushpura or Peshawar was his capital.

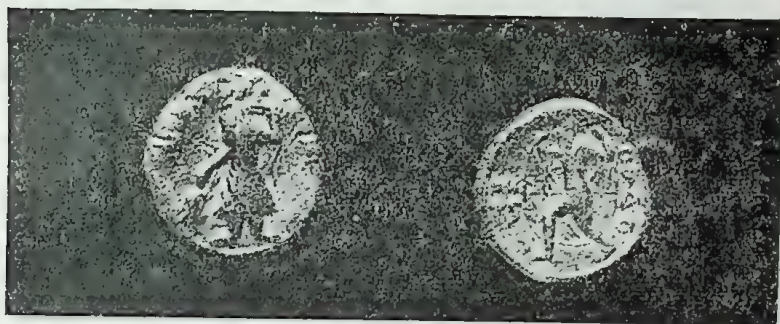
He also waged relentless wars against the Chinese, his old enemies. It is said that on one occasion he captured one or more Chinese princes as hostages, whom he kept in Kashmir. During his wars in the north-west he conquered Kashgar, Yaqand and Khotan, which so far had recognised Chinese overlordship. The Chinese, however, had their revenge and under General Pan Chao defeated him towards the end of the First Century A.D.

### **His religion**

Kanishka was not only a great conqueror; he is better known for his patronage of Buddhism and for his monuments.

After some time Kanishka became a convert to Buddhism,

but he did not give up warfare like Asoka. He continued to fight right upto the end.



*Copper Coin of Kushan Emperor Kanishka (1st Century)*

Several foreign princes who invaded India from the Second Century B.C. onwards had adopted Buddhism which underwent changes because of its contact with new creeds and new influences. There was, therefore, much controversy over the interpretation of Buddha's teachings. To resolve them, Kanishka held the Fourth Buddhist Council at Kundavana in Kashmir. The differences among the Buddhists could not be resolved and they were split into two sects, "Mahayanas" or "higher vehicle", and "Hinayanas" or "lower vehicle". The Mahayanas began to worship Buddha as God, built temples in his honour and installed his idols in them. Thus idol worship was introduced in Buddhism. The Hinayanas continued to follow the old faith and regarded Buddha only as a great religious leader.

Kanishka followed the Mahayana form of Buddhism and spread it far and wide by sending missions to Central Asia and China. The Mahayana form flourished mostly in the north while the south continued to follow the Hinayana form. This division in Buddhism in the long run weakened its hold on the people in India.

### **Patronage of art and literature**

Kanishka was a great patron of learning and art. Several famous scholars, Asvaghosha, Nagarjuna, Vasumitra and Charak adorned his court. Charak was the founder of the Ayurvedic system of medicine.

Kanishka was also a great builder and a huge tower (Chaitya) 400 feet high was built in Peshawar over Buddha's relics. This was admired by many people. He also built a town in Kashmir called Kanishkapur. Under his patronage the Gandhara school of art flourished and a large number of artistic statues of Buddha were made. At Muthra a remarkable portrait statue of Kanishka was also found.

### **His death**

He ruled for nearly 23 years. There is a marked difference of opinion among historians regarding the dates of his reign. It is widely accepted that he ruled at the end of the First Century and the beginning of the Second Century A.D. Some historians say that he was founder of the Saka Era (Saka Samvat). Indian authors have designated all foreign rulers of this period as Sakas or Scythians and therefore, though he was not a Saka, the era he founded was called the Saka Era.

### **His successors**

He was succeeded by several kings, such as Vasishka, Huvishka and Vasudeva, some of whom followed Buddhism, others Brahmanism. Under Vasudeva, Muthra assumed greater importance than Peshawar, but after his death the Kushan Empire began to decline and it was confined to small possessions near Kabul and in north-west India.

### **Condition of society (184 B.C.—300 A.D.)**

The influx of several foreign tribes — the Greeks, Parthians, Sakas and Kushans — and their contact with Indian tribes influenced the social, political and cultural structure of Indian society.

### **Political conditions**

The great Mauryan Empire declined and on its ruins sprang up a number of States. India was once again split into big and small kingdoms and inter-State wars were common. This strife exposed India to external aggression and from the Second Century B.C. to the First Century A.D. she was the victim of several invasions. The foreign invaders in due course of time adopted India as their home and established their principalities

in north-western and northern India. These foreign kings took high sounding titles and called themselves "Deva Putra", Son of God. They introduced the Persian institution of satrapies and provinces were ruled by military governors. They tended to become independent whenever the central authority became weak.

In the Deccan, the kings ruled with the help of ministers and an assembly or 'Sabha' of the tribal chiefs which advised the king on all important matters. A special feature of the political life of this period was the struggle for supremacy among the Satvahanas of the Deccan, the Kushans of the north and the Sakas of the north west.

### **Social conditions**

The Sunga, Kanava and Satvahana dynasties were Brahmanas and under them Brahmanism was once again revived and consequently Brahmanas established their supremacy over other castes once again. However, the old caste system which divided people into four major castes, namely, Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras was considerably influenced by foreign invaders who settled in India and inter-married with the Indian people. Examples of Indian rulers marrying foreign princesses were not uncommon either. Therefore, the result was multiplicity of castes. Caste was now determined by occupation and tended to become hereditary.

"Manu Smriti" which became the chief source of Hindu law, was compiled during this period. It laid down the duties of man towards family, caste and State. It recognised eight kinds of marriages and prohibited widow remarriage. It definitely lowered the status of women in society and they were treated as inferior to men. Even for protection they depended on men. Normally when unmarried the father was their guardian, after marriage the husband and when widow, the son. The position of Sudras became still worse.

After the day's hard work most people indulged in various amusements and recreation. Gambling, dancing and music were very common. People learnt to play musical instruments as pipes, flutes and drums.

### **Economic conditions**

A large majority of the people were still peasants and lived in



villages. Industries were encouraged and patronised by rulers and controlled by guilds as in Mauryan times.

The Deccan States carried on maritime trade with Rome and countries in south-east Asia and became very prosperous. Luxury goods; spices, precious stones and even birds and animals such as peacocks and monkeys, were exported to foreign countries.

This foreign trade brought much wealth into the country and rulers issued gold and silver coins to signify their prosperity.

### **Religious conditions**

Indian religions were adaptable and elastic and it was possible for foreign invaders to adopt them. Some of them accepted Buddhism, some adopted Jainism and the others followed Brahmanism. Under the Sungas, Kanavas and Satvahans, Brahmanism once again became a dominant religion for some time.

Under the impact of foreign influence there arose several sects in each religion. Under Kanishka Buddhism was divided into two sects — the Mahayanas and Hinayanas, the Mahayana form was very similar to Brahmanism and recognised idol worship. Numerous temples of Buddha were constructed. Kanishka spread Mahayana Buddhism in north Asia and China.

Similarly, Jainism was divided into two sects, Svetambars and Degambars. In Hinduism, side by side with the worship of old Hindu gods, the cult of Shiva and Vishnu attracted a larger number of people and many temples were dedicated to them. Under the influence of Buddhism and Jainism, sacrifices declined though some Brahmana rulers still performed horse sacrifice. Among the Hindus, the study of the Gita became very popular.

Despite the diversity of religions, there was remarkable freedom of worship throughout the country. All religions flourished side by side and there was no religious persecution. Rulers patronised all religions, irrespective of their personal creeds. In the First Century A.D. Christianity also reached India and was first preached in Malabar. Christ, who was regarded by his followers as the Son of God, preached universal love. With his birth, a new system of counting years, "The Christian Era", began. The years before his birth were called B.C. (Before

Christ) and after his birth A.D. (Anno Domini). The Christian Era is accepted universally.

### Cultural conditions

Art was the handmaid of religion and therefore there was great development of religious art. Caves and temples were decorated with paintings on walls and ceilings. The best examples can still be seen in the Ajanta caves.

Sculpture reached new heights under Greek influence and the Gandhara and Muthra schools of art flourished in northern India. Artistic statues of Buddha were made. Hindu art also flourished in Sarnath and Amravati.

Money for these decorations was freely given by prosperous and devout merchants who also contributed generously for the construction of temples and monasteries.

### Literature

Sanskrit was the language of culture. This period produced some famous scholars. Asvaghosha and Nagarjuna were great Buddhist philosophers and Charak an authority on medicine.

In the far south, Shangam literature flourished. Poets and bards of the kingdoms of Cholas, Pandyas and Cheras met at Madurai and collected poems which were later compiled into eight books. These were called the Shangam literature. They described the deeds of valour of the chiefs and the life of the common people. Indian traders spread Indian culture and Indian religions in south-east Asian countries and north Asia and several Sanskrit books were translated into foreign languages. Indian cultural influence is still dominant in south-east Asia.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE GUPTA EMPIRE

#### INDIA ON THE EVE OF THE RISE OF THE GUPTAS :

**I**N the previous chapter we have read how India fell a victim to foreign invasions after the downfall of the Mauryan Empire and how the Indo-Greeks, Parthians, Sakas and Kushans established their satrapies in north and west India. Out of these invaders only the Kushans succeeded in building up a large empire which was at the height of its glory under Kanishka in the First Century A.D. However, by the end of the Third Century India was once again divided into a number of small States, not one of them strong enough to claim suzerainty over the others.

The important States in northern India were as follows : In north-west India, Kushans were still powerful; the Sakas ruled in Malwa and Kathiawar; the Nagas established their kingdom in the Gangetic Valley. Besides them there were several tribal republics such as the Lichhavis who were powerful in north Bihar. The Guptas, a local dynasty, ruled over Magadha.

#### **The Deccan**

The Deccan, which was divided into several States, was ruled by different dynasties. The most powerful of them were the Vakatakas and Pallavas. The former ruled in north Deccan (south of the river Narmada) and the latter held sway in Tamil Nadu with Kanchi (Kanchipuram) as their capital.

#### **The Gupta dynasty**

The rise of the Guptas at the beginning of the Fourth Century marked a national revival against foreign rule and was accompanied by a revival of Brahmanism. It also witnessed great literary and artistic activity and produced some of the





State near Pataliputra. He was succeeded by his son Ghatotkacha. Very little is known about both of them.

### **Chandragupta I (320—330 A.D.)**

He was the third ruler of the dynasty. He laid the true foundations of a great empire by marrying Kumar Devi, a Lichhavi princess. The Lichhavis were still powerful in north-east India. This matrimonial alliance strengthened his position and he extended his kingdom by conquering Oudh and Allahabad. He also assumed the title of Maharajadhiraja to signify his superiority over the neighbouring rulers.

When he was getting old he appointed his son Samudragupta as Yuvaraj.



*The Golden Seal of Chandragupta I. One side Kumaradevi is with King and on the other there is Goddess.*

### **Samudragupta (330—375 A.D.)**

He succeeded his father and was one of the greatest rulers of the Gupta dynasty. We know a good deal about his reign from the inscriptions on the Asoka pillar at Allahabad. They give us an account of his conquests and other attainments.

He was a powerful and ambitious prince and wanted to expand his kingdom.

#### **Wars and conquests :**

##### **Northern India**

Samudragupta waged several wars against his neighbours, overthrew the kings of northern India and annexed Rohilkhand and Gangetic Jamuna Doab. He also conquered Padmayati and Malwa in central India. Then he turned his



*The Golden Seal of Samudragupta.*

attention to the east and annexed parts of Bengal. He also conquered various forest States in the Vindhya region.

### **The Deccan campaign**

Having conquered a large part of northern India, he turned his attention to the Deccan. At the head of a large army, he left Pataliputra for the south. He defeated the king of south Kosala and then crossed the forest in central India and conquered Orissa. He continued his advance southward, marching along the east coast. He overran the Pallava kingdom then ruled by Vishnugupta. Next he turned westward and crossed the river Kaveri. On his return journey he passed through modern Mysore, Andhra Pradesh and central India. During the course of his Deccan campaign he defeated twelve kings. He did not annex the conquered States outright but restored them to their rulers, who accepted his suzerainty and agreed to pay him tribute.

On his victorious return to Pataliputra he performed the horse sacrifice.

On account of his successful campaign in the Deccan, some western historians have called him "The Indian Napoleon".

His victories in the north and the south so overawed even the chiefs of Bengal, Assam (Kamrup), Nepal, Garhwal and central Punjab that they also paid homage to him.

### **The extent of his empire**

He ruled directly over a vast empire whose boundaries extended from the Brahmaputra in the east to the Jamuna and Chambal in the west, from the foothills on the Himalayas in

the north to the river Narbada in the south. Besides these, the States of the Deccan and of Punjab, Malwa, Nepal, Assam and Garhwal paid him tribute. The empire over which he ruled directly was smaller compared with the Mauryan Empire.

### **Relations with foreign rulers**

His fame spread far and wide and even foreign kings wanted to be on friendly terms with him. Deviputra Shahi, the Kushan ruler of Kabul and Meghvarna, the king of Ceylon, sent ambassadors to his court with rich presents. The Ceylonese king was granted permission to build a monastery at Bodhi Gaya for the convenience of Ceylonese Buddhist pilgrims. This showed that in religious matters he was a liberal minded emperor.

### **An estimate of his character**

He was not only a great warrior and conqueror but also a man of remarkable personal accomplishments. He was a great scholar, poet and musician. Some of his coins show him playing the veena. He also patronised great scholars and some famous poets and writers were attracted to his court.

### **Ramagupta**

It is widely believed that Samudragupta was succeeded by his eldest son Ramagupta, who ruled for some time. He was a weak and cowardly prince. When he was defeated by a Saka king he consented to surrender his queen Dhru Devi to him to save his kingdom. His younger brother Chandragupta was roused to anger at this. The honour and dignity of the Gupta dynasty was at stake and in order to save them, Chandragupta murdered the Saka king. Then he deposed and killed his own brother also, married his widow and ascended the throne.

### **Chandragupta II or Chandragupta Vikramaditya (375—415 A.D.)**

Chandragupta II is better known as Chandragupta Vikramaditya. He was, like his father Samudragupta, an ambitious ruler. He was also famous for his justice and patronage of art and literature. There are numerous stories and anecdotes about the dispensation of justice by him.



*The Golden Seal of Chandragupta I and II.*

### **His conquests**

He extended his empire by wars and matrimonial alliances. He married Kubernaga, a Naga princess and won over the support of the Naga chief of the upper and the central provinces. He married his daughter Prabhavati to Rudra Sen II, the powerful Vakataka king of the Deccan, further strengthening his empire. As a result of these matrimonial alliances he established friendly relations with the Nagas and the Vakatakas.

Then he marched westward and waged successful wars against the Saka rulers of western India and conquered Malwa, Gujarat and Kathiawar.

He made Ujjain the second capital and set up a magnificent court there which was adorned by several great scholars, popularly known as the 'Nine Gems', Kalidas, the famous Sanskrit playwright, being one of them.

### **Visit of Fa Hien**

Fa Hien, a celebrated Buddhist pilgrim from China, visited India from 405 to 411 A.D. Buddhism had spread to China much earlier and some scholars and Buddhist pilgrims wanted to see the holy places associated with Buddha and study all its sacred books found in India. Fa Hien was one of them. He left his home in 399 A.D. and travelled to India by the land route. After crossing the Gobi desert, he entered the Swat valley in north-west India. He spent six years touring the Gupta Empire and visited several holy places. He returned to China by sea, sailing from the port of Tamralipti in Bengal.



On his return to China, he wrote an account of the conditions in India. His book is a very important source of information about the reign of the Guptas. We shall read more about his account later.

### **The successors of Chandragupta II :**

#### **Kumargupta I (415—455 A.D.)**

He was the last great Gupta emperor and maintained the unity and solidarity of the empire. Not much is known about him but we know that he performed the horse sacrifice.

#### **Skandgupta (455—467 A.D.)**

During his reign the Huns started invading India. They were very cruel and barbarous people living in central Asia. They left their homes in search of pastures and fertile land. They invaded Europe also. Wherever they went they struck terror into the hearts of the people by destroying crops, burning villages and towns and massacring a large number of people. By their brutality and barbarity they completely overawed the people. Skandgupta successfully repelled their invasion and succeeded in keeping the empire intact.

After his death, the invasions of the Huns became more frequent and his weak successors could not resist them and gradually the Gupta Empire began to break up.

#### **Bodhgupta (476—495 A.D.)**

Bodhgupta temporarily succeeded in defeating the Huns. After him, under their ruthless leaders Toramana, and Mihirgula, the Huns overran the whole of north and west India upto Malwa. Though the Gupta kings continued to rule over Magadha upto the middle of the Sixth Century A.D., their empire had considerably shrunk.

### **Causes of the downfall of the Gupta Empire**

The Gupta Empire lasted only for a couple of centuries and broke up because of the following causes :

First, the successors of Skandgupta were weak and could not maintain the unity of the empire. It had become much too big for the incompetent rulers to hold together.

Secondly, the dissensions and rivalry among the Gupta

princes resulted in the division of the empire, hastening its downfall.

Thirdly, provincial governors took advantage of these rivalries and grasped the first opportunity to overthrow the central authority to assert their independence.

Fourthly, repeated barbarous invasions of the Huns politically demoralised the people and disrupted the empire. The Gupta rulers could not successfully repel these invasions.

Therefore, once again India was divided into a number of small States about which we shall read in the next chapter.

### **Condition of Society in the Gupta Empire (300—500 A.D.)**

#### **“The Golden Age”**

We have very good sources of information, both Indian and foreign, regarding the Gupta period. Indian writers, including Kalidas, Hari Sen and Veer Sen, have depicted a very vivid picture of the conditions of society under the Guptas. Moreover, the account written by Fa Hien on his visit to India also forms a very valuable and independent source of information about this period.

#### **Political conditions**

Upto 300 A.D. there were two types of States in India, monarchical and republic. During the Gupta period, the republics disappeared. Kingship also became hereditary and kings took high sounding titles and regarded themselves as representatives of God on earth. In their old age some kings nominated their successors who were called Yuvaraj or heir apparent. The kings wielded large powers and were benevolent despots. They defended the country against foreign invasions, maintained law and order, and also administered justice. All this work could not be performed by the king alone. Therefore, he appointed a number of ministers to help in administering the country. Below them, there were many officials to carry out day-to-day administration in towns and villages. There was a distinction between civil and military officers. Salaries to officers were paid in cash in the early Gupta period but later the system of granting right to collect revenue from land was given to them. This tended to weaken the emperors’

hold on them and was one of the major causes of the disruption and downfall of the empire, as ambitious officers often defied the central authority when the emperor was weak.

Justice was speedy and fair and punishments mild. But crime was rare. Chandragupta Vikramaditya was famous for his administration of justice and there are numerous legends and anecdotes about his dispensation of justice.

The chief sources of income were land revenue, excise duties at ports, crown land, mines and tributes from those rulers who had accepted the Gupta emperors as their overlords. The land revenue was fixed at 1/6th of the produce. Tax could be paid both in cash and kind.

The army was well organised because the strength of the empire depended upon its efficiency. The chief branches of the armed forces were cavalry, infantry, elephants and navy. Some times horses were imported from Arabia, which produced a better breed.

The empire was divided into provinces, districts and villages. Provincial governors enjoyed vast powers and were more independent than governors of the Mauryan period. When the later Guptas became weak the provincial governors rebelled and declared their independence. In districts and towns there were councils consisting of officials and non-officials to advise and assist the governors in administration.

On the whole the administration was very efficient and officers were honest and loyal. They did not harass the people and there was all-round peace and prosperity in the country. Fa Hien testifies to the great security that prevailed in the country. There was no fear of thieves and people did not lock their houses.

### **Social conditions :**

#### **Castes**

A large number of foreigners who had invaded India in the past had been absorbed in Indian society. This caused multiplicity of castes. Since the Gupta rulers patronised Brahmanism, Brahmanas once again established their supremacy. High caste Hindus treated the Sudras badly. They had to live outside the towns and were not allowed to mix with the other castes. The

rules of marriage were elastic and there were frequent inter-caste marriages.

### **Position of women**

Women, as a rule, occupied a place of honour in society and sometimes took part in administration. In south India they were even appointed as governors of provinces and heads of villages. They were liberally educated and were skilled in music and dancing. There was no purdah system. Among the kings and nobles, polygamy was common. The practice of 'Sati' was also prevalent.

### **Food**

People were mostly vegetarian and ate wheat, rice, barley, vegetables, milk and milk products.

### **General**

The people by and large were honest, charitable and kind. There were a number of charitable institutions where free food was given to the poor. Even the sick were looked after and doctors attended upon them. In some parts slavery existed, while forced labour also was common.

### **Economic conditions**

A large number of people were peasants and lived in villages. In addition, industries were highly developed and patronised by kings and nobles. Consequently a number of towns had grown. Trade was carried on both by land and sea. The ship-building industry received great encouragement and helped in carrying on trade with foreign countries. Several parts along the east and west coasts of India were developed. Of these Tamralipti in Bengal, and Broach, Sopara and Kalyan on the west coast were famous. Indian goods were exported to west Asia and south-east Asian countries. This foreign trade brought plenty of wealth into the country and enriched the industrialists and merchants who also spread their culture and religion in the countries they visited. Thus they helped in spreading Hinduism and Buddhism abroad.

### **Religious conditions**

Under the Guptas, Hinduism became popular again and



sacrifices were revived. 'The Bhakti Movement', namely belief in a personal God, became very popular among the Hindus. There grew two sects, 'Shaivites' and 'Vaishnavites', i.e., worshippers of Shiva and Vishnu respectively. Worship of Surya, Ganesh and Durga also was popular. People believed in the doctrine of 'Avtars', incarnation of God in human form.

Though the Gupta emperors were Hindu, they were liberal-minded and granted freedom of worship to all religions. Buddhism and Jainism flourished side by side. The former was still popular in north-west India. Meghvarna, the Buddhist king of Ceylon, was allowed to build a monastery at Bodh Gaya.

### Literature and Art

Some Gupta kings were great scholars themselves and under their patronage literature and art made great progress.

Chandragupta Vikramaditya had collected some of the wisest men of the empire. They were known as the 'Nine Gems'. Kalidas and Hari Sen were the most famous of them. Kalidas, who has been called the Indian Shakespeare by western historians, wrote *Shakuntala*, *Meghdoot* and *Raghuvansha*. His books, originally written in Sanskrit, have been translated into several foreign languages. Many sacred books, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and the Purans were re-written during this period. *Panchtantra*, a collection of fables was also compiled during this period.

Besides literature, great advance was made in various sciences including mathematics, astronomy, and metallurgy. Arya Bhatta, the renowned mathematician, explained that the earth moved round the sun but the people did not believe him. Indians knew the use of zero and the decimal system. Varahamihira was a great astronomer. The iron pillar near the Qutab Minar is an example of the purest type of iron which was produced in the Gupta Age. There is a good deal of controversy about the ruler who installed this pillar. But it is widely accepted that Chandragupta Vikramaditya was responsible for erecting it.

The Gupta kings were also great builders, a number of temples of Vishnu and Shiva having been constructed. They were generally one room temples. The art of painting and

sculpture also reached its peak during this period, the best specimens being found in the Ajanta and Ellora caves.

### **Conclusion**

In short, the Gupta period was an age of progress in all spheres of human activity. The country was prosperous, taxes were low, people were happy and contented, and peace prevailed everywhere. There was also religious tolerance and great progress in art and culture. Hence this period is often called the Golden Age of the Hindu period.

## CHAPTER XIII

# HARSHA AND HIS TIMES

### Invasions of the Huns

**T**HE invasions of the Huns hastened the downfall of the Gupta Empire. The Huns were nomadic people who originally lived in central Asia but were driven from their homes by the Chinese. They were fierce and wild and took delight in burning villages, destroying standing crops and killing people mercilessly. Wherever they went they terrorised people by their brutal deeds. Their great leaders were Toramana and his son Mihirgula. They overran Afghanistan and Persia. Some of them also went to Europe and caused much destruction there. They started pouring into India in the reign of Skandgupta and were chiefly responsible for the breakup of the Gupta Empire.

Mihirgula established a fairly big empire in north India with Sialkot as the capital. The atrocities of the Huns roused Indian rulers and King Baladitya of Magadha and Yashodharman of Malwa joined and defeated Mihirgula, who was taken prisoner but later released. He then went to Kashmir where he was given shelter by the ruler. But he proved a traitor, killed the Kashmir king and usurped the throne. Then he conquered Gandhara and destroyed several Buddhist monasteries. After his death several petty Hun chiefs established their principalities in north-west India.

As a result of the invasions of the Huns, India was once again divided into a number of small States. (In the following pages we shall briefly study their history.)

### (A) NORTH INDIA

The following were the chief states in north India.

#### 1. Magadha

It continued to be ruled by Gupta kings but its size had be-

come considerably small and its importance also had diminished. Its rulers were frequently at war with their neighbours, the Maukharis of Kanauj.

## 2. Kanauj

The Maukharis ruled in Kanauj. They were the original feudatory chiefs of Magadha. In the middle of the Sixth Century they overthrew the suzerainty of Magadha and Kanauj became a powerful State under Isanavarman Maukhari. He carried on the struggle against the Huns and waged wars against the rulers of Magadha also. He was succeeded by three more kings.

The last great ruler was Grahvarman, who was married to Rajyasri, daughter of Prabhakar Vardhana, the ruler of Thanesar and sister of Harsha. Kanauj and Malwa were often at war with each other and Devgupta, the ruler of Malwa, defeated and killed Grahvarman.

## 3. Malva

It broke away from Magadha when the Gupta rulers became weak. Another branch of the Gupta dynasty established its rule there. Yasodharman was one of its outstanding rulers. He defeated the Huns under their great leader Mihirgula. Mandsor was his capital.

## 4. Saurashtra

The Vallabhis established their power in Saurashtra. Siladitya was one of their famous rulers. It was a seat of Buddhist culture for many years.

## 5. Gaud of Bengal

In eastern India Gaud was a powerful state under Sasanka, a contemporary of Harsha.

## 6. Thanesar

The Vardhanas, descendants of Pushyabhuti, a devotee of Shiva, ruled in Thanesar. Prabhakar Vardhana, who ruled at the end of the Sixth Century A.D., expanded the boundaries of his kingdom. He also waged wars against the Huns. He had two sons, Rajya Vardhana and Harsha Vardhana and a daugh-



ter, Rajyasri who was married to Grahvarman, the king of Kanauj. In 604 A.D. when Rajya Vardhana and Harsha had both gone on an expedition against the Huns, Prabhakar Vardhana died. Rajya Vardhana, the elder son, succeeded to the throne.

About this time a struggle was going on between Devgupta of Malwa and Grahvarman Maukhari of Kanauj and Grahvarman was killed. Rajyasri, his queen, was imprisoned. Rajya Vardhana sought to avenge the death of his brother-in-law and to rescue his sister. Though he succeeded in defeating Devgupta of Malwa, he was treacherously killed by Sasanka, the ruler of Gaud, an ally of the king of Malwa. Upon his death, the nobles offered the Thanesar crown to young Harsha, who was only 16 at that time.

#### **Harsha Vardhana : 600—647 A.D.**

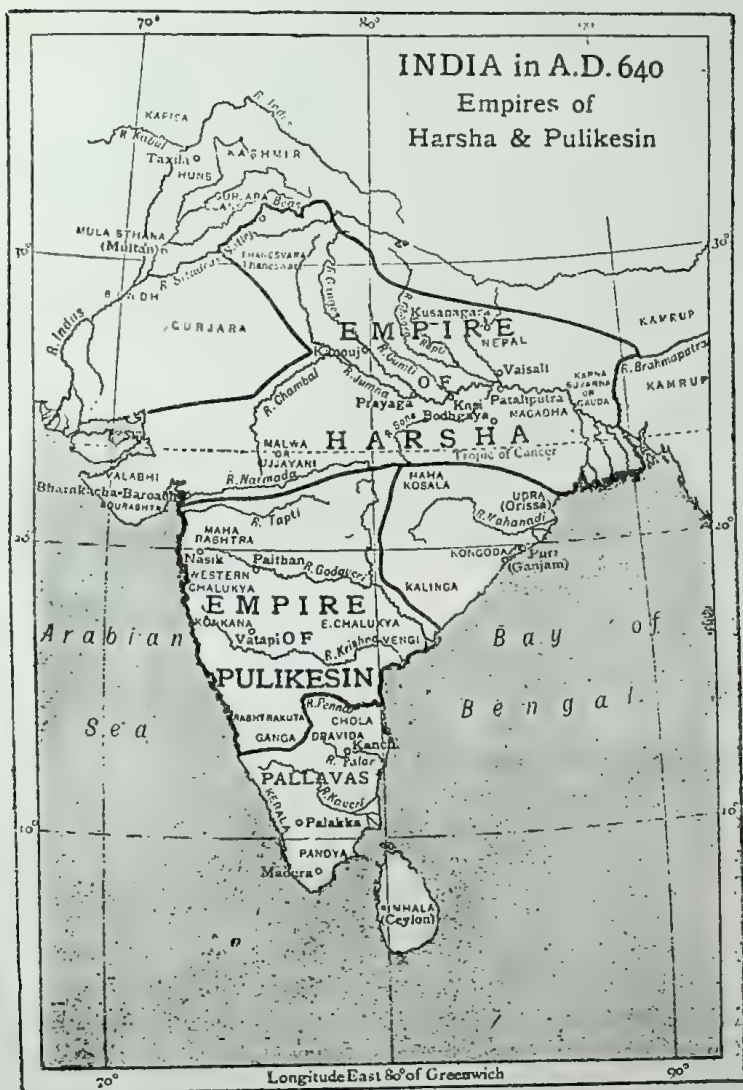
On his accession to the throne, Harsha faced three major problems. First, he had to rescue his sister Rajyasri; secondly, he had to take revenge on the murderer of his brother; and thirdly, he had to consolidate his kingdom, which was threatened on all sides by enemies.

#### **How he rescued his sister**

After the murder of her husband, Grahvarman, Rajyasri had been imprisoned in Kanauj but she succeeded in making her escape and took shelter in the Vindhya mountains. Harsha went in search of her, accompanied by Madhavgupta, prince of Malwa. He found her just in time as she was getting ready to become a 'Sati' and persuaded her to return home. She conferred the kingdom of Kanauj on Harsha and he transferred his capital to Kanauj.

#### **Struggle with Sasanka**

The struggle against Sasanka, ruler of Gaud, who was responsible for the murder of Rajya Vardhana, was a long one. Sasanka was a powerful ruler and Harsha alone was not strong enough to defeat him. So he made an alliance with Bhaskarvarman, king of Kamrup (Assam). It was only in 619 A.D. that Harsha succeeded in defeating Sasanka, though the latter continued to give him trouble till he died about 637 A.D.



### The consolidation of his kingdom : Wars and conquests

Harsha was a powerful ruler and wanted to expand and consolidate his empire. Therefore, he raised a big army, consisting of infantry, cavalry and elephants. Singhanad, a great warrior, was appointed the chief commander. He waged several wars against his neighbours and conquered several states.

**The conquest of Five Indies : 606-612 A.D.**

During this period Harsha was busy in bringing under his control the States of eastern Punjab, Kanauj, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Historians have called them the Five Indies.

Next he turned his attention to Gujarat. It was then ruled by the Vallabhi king named Dhruvabhatta. The latter was defeated and he accepted the suzerainty of Harsha and attended his court. He also married the daughter of Harsha.

**Struggle with Pulikesin II, the great Chalukya king of the Deccan:**

Harsha now wanted to expand the empire beyond the Vindhyas. The Deccan at this time was ruled by Pulikesin II, a powerful and illustrious ruler of the Chalukya dynasty. In the struggle between the two Harsha was decisively defeated by Pulikesin on the banks of Narbada some time before 334 A.D. That was the end of Harsha's ambition to extend his empire in the south.

**Conquest of Ganjam**

Ganjam was Harsha's last conquest on the eastern coast in 643 A.D.

**Relations with foreign rulers**

It is said that Harsha led expeditions to Nepal, Kashmir and also to Sind but it is very doubtful whether he succeeded in conquering them. However, the rulers of these kingdoms held Harsha in high esteem and were on friendly terms with him.

**Extent of his empire**

Harsha's empire extended from Bengal in the east to eastern Punjab in the west. It included Thanesar, Kanauj, Rohilkhand, Oudh, Allahabad, Magadha and Orissa.

The rulers of Gujarat, Sind, Nepal, Kashmir and Kamrup were his allies.

**Visit of Hiuen Tsang : 630—645 A.D.**

Hiuen Tsang was a noted Chinese pilgrim and a celebrated Buddhist scholar. He left China at the age of 26. Travelling through central Asia, he entered India by the north-west passes.

He was in India for about 16 years, travelling widely and visiting the holy places of Buddhism. He also spent some time studying at the famous university of Nalanda. He became a personal friend of Harsha. On his return to China, he wrote an account of his travels in India (about which we shall read more later in this chapter).

### **Harsha's religion**

Harsha was a follower of Hinduism in the beginning and worshipped Shiva and the Sun but later he became more inclined to Buddhism under the influence of Hiuen Tsang. Though he favoured Buddhism, yet there was perfect freedom of worship in his reign and Buddhists and Hindus both received charity from him. Under the influence of Buddhism, he prohibited animal sacrifice, gave up eating meat and constructed many rest houses, stupas and monasteries. He also distributed large sums of money in charity to the poor.

### **Assemblies at Prayag**

Every five years Harsha held religious assemblies at Prayag where idols of various gods including Shiva, Sun and Buddha were taken out in procession with great pomp. The festivities lasted several days and discussions on religious questions were held. On the last day a large amount of wealth and clothes were given away in charity and Harsha would request his sister to give him clothes to wear.

### **Assembly at Kanauj : 643 A.D.**

A special assembly was held at Kanauj in 643 A.D. in honour of Hiuen Tsang, the great Chinese master of law. It was attended by 20 kings and many religious leaders of the Brahmanas, Jains and Buddhists. Hiuen Tsang explained in his learned discourses the philosophy of the Mahayana form of Buddhism. Harsha held him in such high esteem that no one was allowed to dispute his statement or to contradict him.

### **Harsha's patronage of learning**

Harsha was a great scholar and writer. He wrote three plays in Sanskrit, namely, *Ratnavali*, *Priyadarshika* and *Naganand*. He had a good knowledge of both Hindu and Buddhist religious



philosophy and also patronised learning and such scholars as Bana, Matange, Divakar, Jayasena and Bharti Hari adorned his court. Bana wrote his biography called 'Harshachartira'. Large sums of money were spent by him on spreading education. Nalanda was a great seat of higher education where even foreign students came to study. The revenue of a hundred villages was assigned to this university to meet its expenses.

### **An estimate of Harsha**

Harsha died in 647 A.D. He was an able ruler who ensured the welfare of his subjects, often touring his empire to know personally the conditions of the people. His tours enabled him to keep a check on the activities of his officials. For this, sometimes, he is called a 'touring emperor'.

He was a great conqueror and built a powerful empire in northern India after the fall of the Guptas. He was liberal-minded in religion and though he favoured Buddhism in later years he did not completely discard the worship of Hindu gods. Himself a great scholar, he patronised learning, and also built a large number of monasteries and rest houses.

## **CONDITION OF SOCIETY**

### **Hiuen Tsang's account of India**

Hiuen Tsang, who spent almost 16 years in India, wrote an account of his visit. His memoirs are called "Si-Yu ki". The book is an invaluable source of information about the political, social, economic and cultural conditions of India in the Seventh Century A.D. Indian writers, especially Bana, also provide a very valuable source of information about the reign of Harsha.

### **Political conditions**

Hiuen Tsang was full of praise for Harsha's administration. He was a benevolent ruler whose sole aim was the welfare of his subjects. He kept in direct touch with the masses to know their conditions at first hand and to keep a check on his officials so that they might not oppress the people.

He was assisted by a Council of Ministers (Mantri Parsihad) who were appointed by and responsible to him. The empire was divided into provinces, districts and villages.

Taxes were light. The chief source of income was land revenue, which was fixed at 1/6th of the produce. Crime was rare though roads were not as safe as they were in the Gupta age. Hiuen Tsang himself was robbed on more than one occasion. The system of trial was crude and sometimes there was trial by ordeal also. Punishment was severe, common punishments being imprisonment, cutting of limbs and fines. For violent crime even the death sentence was awarded sometimes.

There was a department of records and all important events were recorded by special officers. From these records we get a good deal of information about his reign.

Harsha was famous for his charities, large sums of money being distributed to the poor. Rest houses were constructed for the convenience of travellers. Harsha also maintained an efficient army which consisted chiefly of infantry, cavalry and war elephants.

Kanauj was a beautiful city with large buildings, parks and tanks. Harsha maintained a magnificent court and led a luxurious life.

### **Social conditions**

The caste system had become rigid. The Sudras were treated as untouchables and had to live outside the towns. People generally married within their own caste and marriages among near relations were not permitted. Women were respected in society and there was no purdah system. They received education also. The custom of 'Sati' was in vogue, Harsha's own mother committing 'Sati'.

People were mostly vegetarian and took various kinds of grains, vegetables, milk and milk products. Onion and garlic were seldom used. Their dress was simple, consisting mostly of two garments, one for the upper and the other for the lower part of the body.

The rich lived in pukka houses which were beautifully decorated while the poor lived in thatched houses. Both the rich and the poor kept their houses clean. These had mud floors which were periodically plastered with cow-dung. Hiuen Tsang called the Indian people honest but hot headed as they were easily roused.

**Economic conditions**

The chief occupation of a large majority of people was agriculture. The state provided all facilities to peasants and in the event of famine gave them relief.

Arts and crafts flourished and industry was patronised by the kings and nobles. Weaving, metal work, leather-craft, pottery and wood work were common industries. Trade and commerce within India and with foreign countries brought much wealth and enriched the people. Indian industrial products were in great demand in distant countries. The Indians were good sailors and made good ships.

**Religious conditions**

Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism developed side by side. In the early part of his reign Harsha was a follower of Brahmanism but later he became more inclined to Buddhism. There was complete freedom of worship. Harsha held a religious assembly at Prayag every five years where idols of various Hindu gods were taken out in a procession and huge sums of money were given away in charity to the people irrespective of their religion. A number of monasteries and stupas were built.

**Cultural conditions**

Art and literature made great strides in the reign of Harsha. He encouraged education at all levels, primary education being given in temples and monasteries and higher education being provided in universities at Taxila, Ujjain, Gaya and Nalanda. Nalanda, near Rajgriha in Bihar, was the biggest seat of higher learning in Asia. It had about 10,000 students on the rolls and over 1500 teachers, some students coming from far off countries to study there. Even Hiuen Tsang spent several years studying Buddhist scriptures at this university. In addition to Buddhist literature and philosophy, Brahmanical literature, logic, astronomy, various sciences, medicine and grammar were also taught there. Shilabhadra, a renowned scholar, was its head. No fees were charged and even board and lodging were free. To meet its expenses Harsha had assigned the revenue of one hundred villages to the university.

Harsha was himself a noted scholar and writer and several great literary figures of the period lived at his court. The most

famous of them was Bana who wrote 'Harsha Charitra' and 'Kadambari'.

The art of town planning was highly developed. Sculpture and painting of a very high order were produced during this period. Elegant temples, stupas and monasteries were constructed. They were adorned with pieces of sculpture and walls and ceilings were artistically painted.

### Conclusion

In short, according to Hiuen Tsang, the reign of Harsha was a glorious period in the history of India. Politically, the people lived in peace and were happy and contented. Harsha was the last great Maharajadhiraj of India. He ensured the well-being of his subjects by personal supervision of administration. Economically the country was prosperous and carried on a lucrative trade with countries of the east and the west. Socially, the number of castes had multiplied and the system had become rigid. Occupations had become hereditary. There was, by and large, security in the country but sometimes thieves and highwaymen harrassed travellers. In the field of arts, crafts and sciences also the country made great progress. In religious matters there was complete freedom of worship and the followers of various religions lived together without any strife.

### B. SOUTH INDIA : FROM ABOUT 250 A.D. to 1100 A.D.

In the preceding chapters we have mostly studied the history of northern India. In the following pages we shall record what happened in south India from 250 A.D. to 1100 A.D.

After the fall of the Satvahana Empire, South India was split into a number of small States which were frequently at war with one another, to gain supremacy. The following dynasties established their kingdoms.

#### 1. The Vakatakas of Berar

Immediately below the Vindhya mountains, in the region of modern Berar, now part of Madhya Pradesh, the Vakatakas became powerful on the decline of the Satvahana Empire about 225 A.D. Their origin is unknown. The founder of the Vakataka dynasty was Vindhya Sakti whose capital was at



Purika, but not much is known about him. One of his successors named Pravarsena I, who ruled in the Fourth Century A.D. was a great ruler. He conquered neighbouring territory and took the title of "Samrat" (emperor) and performed the horse sacrifice. Rudrasena II, a contemporary of Chandragupta Vikramaditya, was another powerful ruler. The last great ruler of this dynasty was Harisena (480—515 A.D.). He conquered Malwa, Gujarat and Andhra. His successors were weak and were overthrown by the Chalukyas, their southern neighbours, about the middle of the Sixth Century A.D.

### **Achievements of the Vakatakas**

They were Hindu rulers. They built several temples and caves which were beautifully decorated with fine pieces of sculpture. They also patronised Sanskrit literature.

### **2. The Chalukyas of Vatapi or Badami**

Their origin is obscure. Some historians say that they were a lunar race, others that they were indigenous people while still others believe that they were descendants of the Huns and Gurjaras who had invaded India earlier and had settled in the Deccan. Pulikesin I was the real founder of the Chalukya kingdom. He rose to power about 550 A.D. and set up his capital at Vatapi in the district of modern Bijapur. His sons, Kirtivarman (566—597 A.D.) and Mangalesa (597—608 A.D.) extended the kingdom, defeating the Kalachuris of northern Deccan and Malwa.

Thereafter there was a bitter struggle for supremacy between the Chalukyas and their eastern neighbours, the Pallavas, for over a century. This conflict between the dynasties weakened both of them.

### **Pulikesin II: 609 to 642 A.D.**

Pulikesin II was the next great Chalukya king. He was a contemporary of Harsha and defeated him on the banks of the Nerbada when he tried to conquer the Deccan. He was a great warrior and defeated Mahendravarman the Pallava king, advancing to within eight miles of Kanchi, the capital of the Pallavas. He conquered the province of Vengi and handed over its govern-

ment to his brother, Kubja Vishnuvardhana, who later became independent and founded the eastern Chalukya dynasty. Hiuen Tsang visited Vatapi in 641 A.D. and was highly impressed by the achievements of Pulikesin II and the splendour of his court. Pulikesin II also sent an ambassador to the Persian Emperor, Khusro II.

The Pallavas did not forget their humiliation at the hands of the Chalukyas and Narsimhavarman, son of Mahendravarman, avenged his father's defeat, killing Pulikesin II in 642 A.D. Vatapi, the capital, was occupied by the Pallavas for the next 13 years.

In 655 A.D. the Chalukya king Vikramaditya I reconquered his father's lost kingdom and even temporarily occupied Kanchi, the Pallava capital. Vikramaditya II, who ruled from 733 to 746 A.D. was the last famous Chalukya king. He defeated the Pallavas once again and occupied Kanchi. He also attacked the Tamil kingdom of Cholas and Pandyas and defeated them. He also defeated the Arabs who had settled in Sind after they tried to invade the Deccan.

After Vikramaditya II, the supremacy of the Chalukyas came to an end. His son Kirtivarman II (746 to 756 A.D.) was defeated by Dantidurga, the Rashtrakuta chief, in 753 A.D.

### **Achievements of the Chalukyas**

The Chalukya rulers were Hindus but they did not persecute the Buddhists or the Jains. They built a powerful navy and developed some ports, encouraging trade with Arabia and Persia. Sea-borne trade brought much wealth in the country and made it prosperous. The rulers were great builders and patrons of art. Temples of Badami are famous and worth visiting.

### **3. The Great Pallavas of Kanchi (Northern Conjeeveram)**

The Pallavas were the descendants of the Naga tribe and were feudatory chiefs of the Satvahanas. About the Third Century A.D. they established their supremacy in eastern Deccan on the decline of the Satvahana Empire.

Vishnu Gopa, one of the Pallava kings, was defeated by Samudragupta in the Fourth Century A.D. when the latter led an expedition to the Deccan.

In the later half of the Sixth Century A.D., Simhavishnu

founded a new dynasty popularly known as the Great Pallavas. He was a great conqueror, overcoming the Pandya and Chola kings of the far south. He also defeated the King of Ceylon. The Pallavas were hereditary rivals of their western neighbours, the Chalukyas of Vatapi, against whom they waged frequent wars.

Mahendravarman I (600—625 A.D.), a contemporary of Harsha, was defeated by Pulikesin II, the Chalukya king and lost the province of Vengi to the Chalukyas (as has been mentioned earlier in this chapter). His son Narsimhavarman I took revenge on the Chalukya king and decisively defeated Pulikesin II, who was killed in 642 A.D. For the next 13 years the Pallavas occupied Vatapi, the Chalukya capital. During his reign the Pallavas were complete masters of the south. He even led a successful expedition to Ceylon and placed his own nominee on the throne. Narsimhavarman I was not only a great warrior but also a great builder. He founded the city of Mamallapuram and built the famous rock-cut *Raths* or the Seven Pagodas. They are masterpieces of Pallava architecture. Hiuen Tsang also visited Kanchi during his reign and was highly impressed by his achievements.

After the death of Narsimhavarman I, Pallava supremacy came to an end. The Chalukyas, their inveterate rivals, had their revenge on the Pallavas when Vikramaditya I, son and successor of Pulikesin II, defeated the Pallava king, Parmesharavarman, in 655 A.D. and even occupied Kanchi temporarily.

The struggle with the Chalukyas continued during the reign of Narsimhavarman II, who built the magnificent temple of Kailashnath at Kanchi and the shore temple at Mamallapuram. The long wars between the Chalukyas and the Pallavas weakened them both and in course of time they were overthrown. The Rashtrakutas defeated the Chalukyas and the Cholas of the far south defeated the Pallavas.

### **Achievements of the Pallavas**

They were adventurous and enlightened rulers. They carried their arms upto Ceylon. They were responsible for building some beautiful temples in the south. They patronised learning and Kanchi, the capital, was a great seat of learning in South India.

#### 4. The Rashtrakutas : 753—953 A.D.

They were a class of hereditary provincial officers under the Chalukyas in north Deccan. Dantidurga (733 to 754 A.D.) their chief, defeated the Chalukya king in 753 A.D. and became master of Maharashtra. He extended his kingdom by conquering Malwa and Gujarat. Krishna I (754 to 773 A.D.), and uncle of Dantidurga, succeeded to the throne. He established his supremacy in the Deccan by inflicting further defeats on the Chalukyas and annexed modern Hyderabad State. He was a great lover of art and built the famous rock-cut temple at Kailash at Ellora.

For a long time there was a triangular contest between the Rashtrakutas of Maharashtra, the Pratiharas of Kanauj and the Palas of Bengal.

We do not know much about Govinda II (773—780 A.D.) the elder son and successor of Krishna I. Dhruva, his younger brother ruled from 780 to 793 A.D. and was the next great king. He defeated Vatsaraj, the Pratihara ruler of Kanauj, at Jhansi. He also defeated Dharampala of Bengal and collected rich booty.

Govinda III (793 to 814 A.D.) was the son and successor of Dhruva. He was the greatest ruler of the dynasty, extending his sway in northern India by defeating Nagabhatta II, the Pratihara ruler of Kanauj, and also Dharampala of Bengal.

The next king Amoghavarsha I had a long reign from 815 to 877 A.D. Most of the time he was busy fighting the Chalukya king of Vengi in the south-east and the Pratihara rulers in the north. He adopted Jainism. Indra III (914—922 A.D.), the great grandson of Amoghavarsha, was the last great king of the dynasty. He decisively defeated Mahipala, Pratihara king of Kanauj. After him the Rashtrakutas gradually became weak because of long and continuous warfare. Kaka II (922—973 A.D.) was the last king. He was defeated and overthrown by Taila or Tailapa II, the founder of the new Chalukya dynasty of Kalyani.

#### Their achievements

The Rashtrakutas, like the Chalukyas, also carried on a lucrative trade with countries bordering the Arabian sea. They also built numerous temples and encouraged art and architec-



ture. They were also patrons of learning. Amoghavarsha I was a noted writer.

### 5. The Cholas of Tanjore

The Cholas ruled in the far south, known as Tamil Nadu. They were an ancient race but we do not know much about their early history. Karikala was the earliest known king in the First Century A.D. The history of his successors upto the Ninth Century is rather obscure.

In the Ninth Century, Vijayalaya, another Chola king revived the fortunes of the dynasty and established his capital at Tanjore. Aditya (875—907 A.D.), his son and successor, fought long wars against the Pallavas and considerably extended his territories. Parantaka I (907—953 A.D.) who succeeded him, completely subdued the Pallavas. He defeated the Pandya king and captured Madura. He also led an unsuccessful expedition to Ceylon.

The next important king was Rajaraja I (985—1016 A.D.). He was called Rajaraja the great for his numerous victories in the north and south. He built a powerful navy and conquered northern Ceylon and many islands in the Indian ocean. With him began the glorious period of Chola domination in the south. He was not only a great warrior but also a patron of art and learning. The beautiful Rajaraja temple of Shiva at Tanjor was constructed by him. Its walls were inscribed with his achievements.

Rajendra Chola (1016—1044 A.D.), who succeeded him, was an equally great king. He continued to expand the empire, conquering the whole of Ceylon. He also subdued the Chalukya rulers and overran central India, Gondwana and Orissa. He defeated Mahipala I of Bengal, captured the lower Gangetic territory and took the title of "Gangaikonda". He led a successful expedition to the Andaman and Nicobar islands and even conquered parts of the Malay Peninsula. The Chola Empire reached its highest point of glory during his reign.

Side by side with warfare he kept the welfare of his subjects in view and constructed a number of public works including dams, canals and roads. He also built temples and palaces.

Rajadhiraja (1044—1054 A.D) the last great king of the dynasty, died fighting against the Chalukyas. After him the

Chola Empire gradually lost its splendour and shrank in size, though the dynasty continued to rule upto the middle of the Thirteenth Century when it was overthrown by the Pandyas.

### **Their achievements**

The Cholas were great imperialists and established a large empire in south India, extending it even beyond the seas. Ceylon, parts of Malaya and a number of islands were included in it. They temporarily held sway even in Bengal and the lower Ganges territory. They were a seafaring people and built a powerful navy which helped them carry on trade with the countries in the east and the west. They spread Indian culture in the countries they conquered or with whom they had trade relations. They were patrons of art and literature and built some massive temples in the south which were beautifully decorated with fine workmanship in sculpture. They also constructed roads, dams and canals. During their reign, Tamil literature was considerably enriched. They set up an efficient system of government based on democratic principles. Village assemblies, partly elected and partly nominated, enjoyed wide powers to deal with local affairs.

### **CONDITION OF SOCIETY IN THE SOUTH**

Earlier in this chapter we read about the conditions of society in northern India as described by Hiuen Tsang. There was very little difference in the north and the south. Whatever differences there were, are mentioned below.

#### **Political conditions**

The most noteworthy innovation in the political conditions in the south was the development of local government under the Cholas. They set up democratic assemblies in villages and in unions of villages. Some members of these assemblies were elected by the people. They enjoyed vast powers to deal with local affairs including collection of taxes, administration of taxes, administration of justice and maintenance of public works.

#### **Economic conditions**

Cultivation was the occupation of the majority of the people,

as in North India. But southern rulers laid greater emphasis on development of maritime trade. They encouraged the ship-building industry and built several ports. Their ships sailed the seas in the east and the west, carrying Indian goods, including spices and pearls to far off lands. Trade with foreign countries brought in much wealth.

### **Cultural conditions**

The rulers did not neglect the development of literature, architecture and the fine arts though they were mostly busy with warfare.

### **Literature**

The kings of the States in the Deccan encouraged Sanskrit literature, while rulers of the far south were great patrons of Tamil literature. A large number of excellent books in both these languages were written under their patronage. Some rulers were great writers themselves.

### **Art and architecture**

The rulers were great builders too. Roads, dams and irrigational works were constructed but there was special concentration on the construction of temples. The Chalukyas beautified Vatapi with a number of temples. The Pallava king Narsimhavarman I built the renowned rock-cut Rathas or the Seven Pagodas. Another Pallava king built the magnificent temple of Kailash at Kanchi. All these temples were artistically decorated with fine specimens of sculpture.

The Cholas in the far south built their temples in Dravidian style, large and massive, with terraced pyramidal towers and big gateways (Gopurams). The Rajaraja temple of Shiva at Tanjore is a typical example of Dravidian architecture.

### **Religious conditions**

All the three Indian religions, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, thrived in south India also. Hinduism was considerably influenced by the other two religions and produced some outstanding reformers known as Acharyas. They travelled from place to place singing hymns in praise of Vishnu and Shiva. They reformed the Hindu religion and initiated a new move-

ment called the "Bhakti" cult. Its special features were : (1) belief in a personal God, (2) faith in 'Avtars' or incarnation of God; according to them Buddha was an Avtar, (3) belief in 'Ahimsa' and denunciation of sacrifices and construction of a number of temples of Vishnu and Shiva.

Under the influence of these saints there arose two cults among the Hindus, Shaivism or worship of Shiva and Vaishnavism or the worship of Vishnu. The following saints were the pioneers of this reform movement:

(1) *Nathu Muni* : He was an acharya of the Vaishnav movement.

(2) *Shankaracharya* : He was born in Malabar towards the end of the Eighth Century A.D. In his early life he became a sanyasi and toured the whole country. By his forceful logic he convinced the people that Buddhism and Jainism were not new religions but were only branches of Hinduism; Hinduism contained the basic principles of both of them. He believed in one God, other gods were only his different forms. He established four 'Maths' all over India, at Badrinath, Puri, Dwaraka and Shringeri. He died at the age of 32 at the beginning of the Ninth Century. His teachings shook people's faith in Buddhism and once again Hinduism was revived.

(3) *Ramanujacharya* : He lived in the Twelfth Century and was a Brahmana by caste. He was a Vaishnav and believed that through 'Bhakti' a person could attain salvation or 'moksha'.

### Conclusion

All the dynasties which ruled below the Vindhya mountains encouraged sea-borne trade and carried Indian culture beyond the shores of India. They built large temples, far more famous and artistic than the temples of the north. Their subjects enjoyed perfect freedom of worship and under their patronage literature, art and architecture made remarkable progress.



## CHAPTER XIV

# THE RAJPUT PERIOD : 700—1200 A.D.

### The rise of the Rajputs

THE invasion of the Huns in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries A.D. completely shook the foundations of the Gupta Empire, ultimately bringing about its downfall, and once again India was divided into a number of big and small principalities. In the Seventh Century, Harsha temporarily succeeded in building an empire on the ruins of the Gupta Empire but after his death a large number of small States were established in northern India. With the death of Harsha the old Hindu dynasties also, by and large, ceased to rule and a new class of rulers, popularly known as the Rajputs, grasped political power practically all over India except the eastern regions. Therefore, the period of Indian history from about 700 to 1200 A.D. is sometimes called the Rajput Period.

### The origin of the Rajputs

The word 'Rajput' does not appear in Sanskrit literature or Indian history before the Seventh Century A.D. The Hindu or Buddhist dynasties such as the Mauryas, Sungas, Kanvas, Guptas, Maukharis and Vardhanas were not called Rajputs. Some of them were Kshatriyas, others Brahmanas, but the new ruling dynasties of the Seventh Century were known by a new name 'the Rajputs'. Who were they and what was their origin? There are several theories about it.

### Descendants of the old Kshatriyas

The Rajputs were a proud people. They themselves claimed descent from the old Kshatriya dynasties but if it were so, why were the ruling dynasties before the Seventh Century A.D. not called Rajputs? Hence this theory is not widely accepted.

**Tribal origin**

Some Rajput clans are of tribal origin, Indian tribes, including Gonds and Bhars, who had martial blood, seized political power after the death of Harsha, when there was chaos in the country. Since they became rulers they began to call themselves Rajputs. Some of these clans are the Bundelas and the Chandelas of central India.

**Mythological origin**

A few Rajput clans claim their descent from Hindu religious legends.

Some of them call themselves 'Agnikul Rajputs'. The origin of this theory is rather interesting. It is said that the famous saint Parashurama killed all the Kshatriyas in his anger and there was no one left to protect the Brahmanas. A new class of warriors was needed to save them. Hence a 'Yag' was performed at Mount Abu in Rajasthan. This went on for 40 days and out of the sacred fire lit there emerged four heroes to protect mankind from evil. Their descendants were called the Agnikul Rajputs. They are the Pratiharas (Parihara), Parmars (Pawars), Solankis (Chalukyas) and Chauhans (Chahamanas).

**Suryavanshi, Chandravanshi**

Quite a number of Rajput clans trace their descent to Rama and Krishna. The descendants of Rama called themselves 'Suryavanshi' and those of Krishna 'Chandravanshi'. It is difficult to believe this theory. Perhaps the bards and poets of Rajput kings gave them these high sounding titles because of their deeds of valour.

**Descendants of foreign invaders**

In Chapter XI we have read how a number of foreign tribes, including the Indo-Greeks, Sakas, Parthians and Kushans, had invaded India and established their own kingdoms in northern and north-west India. In the Fifth and Sixth Centuries A.D. the Huns and Gurjaras also invaded India. In course of time they became Indianised and adopted Indian religions. Their descendants were given a new name. Since they originally did not belong to any of the traditional Hindu castes, they were called the Rajputs.

**Mixed race**

Some historians believe that the Rajputs were of mixed origin. The foreign tribes mentioned above settled in India and married Indian women. Their offsprings were called the Rajputs.

The last theory is widely accepted.

**Special characteristics**

Whatever the origin of the Rajputs, we know that they were divided into a number of clans under their different leaders who were often at war with one another. They were warlike people and many of their customs and characteristics were peculiar to themselves. These distinguished them from the other Indian communities.

They were great warriors and loved the sword and the horse immensely. Even today, though the old Rajput splendour is fast vanishing, on every ceremonial occasion a true Rajput would still carry his sword. They were fond of outdoor life, such as hunting, shooting, and pig-sticking. Whenever a young Rajkumar, son of a prince, killed the first wild pig or any other big game, the occasion was celebrated with great feasting and rejoicing. They were also very brave and courageous and were never afraid of death. Death on the battlefield opened the gateways of heaven to them. They were very zealous of their word of honour or 'Vachan' and would gladly lay down their lives upto the famous couplet of the Ramayana :

"Raghukul Reet Yahi Chali Ayee  
Pran Jaen par Vachan na Jayee".

Another special characteristic of the Rajputs was chivalry. They were always ready to help the weaker people in society, particularly the women. There are numerous stories of their chivalrous deeds, when they had gone out to fight to safeguard the honour of young princesses. They were devout Hindus and built many temples. Under their patronage Hinduism, was revived and Buddhism was on the decline but they were liberal-minded rulers and did not persecute either Buddhists or Jains. They were also patrons of art and literature. Some of them were great writers. Many renowned scholars, musicians and painters lived at their courts. They were to a very large extent

responsible for not only preserving Hindu culture and ancient knowledge but were also responsible for encouraging it.

### **Characteristics of womenfolk**

The Rajput women were equally brave. They would gladly lay down their lives for the honour of their country. Rajput history is full of anecdotes about their deeds of valour. They would not allow a defeated husband to return home and would refuse to see his face. In times of war, when there was no hope of victory, they would gladly perform 'Jauhar' rather than fall into the hands of the invaders. The Rajput women would light a huge pyre and jump into it to save their honour, while the menfolk wore saffron coloured clothes and with swords in their hands fell upon the enemy to do or die. They were never afraid of death. They were deeply devoted to their husbands and when widowed gladly became 'Satis'. This custom was very common among them and even in modern times we occasionally hear of such an incident in Rajasthan. Like their husbands they were intensely religious and celebrated all Hindu festivals with great devotion.

### **Vice of the Rajputs**

While their virtues were many, they had a few vices also which ultimately brought about their downfall. The most prominent was disunity. They could never unite, even when faced with a ferocious and determined enemy. They quarrelled and struggled among themselves because of petty rivalries and jealousies. This disunity among them was the principal cause of their defeat at the hands of Muslim invaders in the 12th and 13th Centuries.

Another weakness of the Rajputs was opium of which they were very fond. On every important religious and social function the cup of opium (*Amal*) went round. This habit considerably weakened them in the long run and made them lazy and indolent.

### **Some important Rajput states**

Harsha was the last great Hindu Maharaja who had built up a big and powerful empire in northern India. After his death, India was once again divided into several States, not one of



them being strong enough to claim suzerainty over the others. Most of these States were ruled by Rajput princes. The following were some of the chief Rajput States in northern India.

### **Kanauj**

It was ruled by Pratihara Rajputs, one of its greatest rulers being Mihr Bhoj, who ruled from 836 to 882 A.D. Kanauj was the most important State in northern India as it had been the seat of government of Harsha. Its rulers enjoyed special status and position among Indian kings. Therefore its possession was strongly desired by the Palas of Bengal and Rashtrakutas of the Deccan. There was a triangular contest amongst the Pratiharas, Palas and Rashtrakutas for supremacy in northern India. These long wars considerably weakened all three of them and ultimately brought about their downfall. The Pratiharas were so weakened that they were defeated by the Rathors or Gahrawars about the end of the Eleventh Century. Jai Chand was the most famous ruler of Kanauj in the Twelfth Century. Jealousy and rivalry between him and Prithvi Raj Chauhan of Delhi brought about the defeat of the Rajputs at the hand of Muhammad Ghori in the last decade of the Twelfth Century. (We shall read more about it in Chapter XVI.)

### **Malwa**

Malwa was another powerful State. It was ruled by Parmar Rajputs and its capital was at Dhar. Raja Bhoj (1018 to 1060 A.D.) was one of the most celebrated rulers of his times. He was a great scholar and patron of literature and art. During his reign Malwa was an extremely prosperous State. He became a legendary figure and numerous stories about his greatness were written.

### **Gujarat and Kathiawar**

These States were ruled by Solanki Rajputs. In 1297 A.D. the armies of Alau-ud-Din Khalji defeated the last ruler of Gujarat named Raja Karan Dev and conquered it.

### **Budelkhand (Central India)**

The Chandela and Bundela Rajputs ruled there. Mahoba

was an important city, ruled by the Chandelas. One of the the great rulers of this dynasty was Ganda who ruled from 950 to 998 A.D.

### **Delhi**

Another Rajput clan, the Tomars, became masters of Delhi. Anangpal who ruled in the Twelfth Century was a great ruler. He was defeated by Vighraharaj (Visal Dev), the Chauhan king of Ajmer in 1163 and Delhi became a part of the Chauhan kingdom.

### **Ajmer**

The Chauhans ruled in Ajmer. They conquered Delhi and thus became the most powerful clan in northern India. Prithviraj Chauhan, who ruled towards the end of the Twelfth Century, was their most famous ruler. He was finally defeated by Muhammad Ghori in 1192 A.D at the second battle of Tarain.

### **Mewar**

The Sisodia Rajputs ruled over Mewar. They called themselves 'Suryavanshi' Rajputs. Bapa Rawal, the founder of the State, was a mighty ruler. Mewar also produced some of the great Rajput warrior kings whose names are now legends in India history. Some of them were Rana Kumbha, Rana Sanga and Maharana Pratap. The Maharanas of Mewar were deeply respected not only in Rajasthan but all over India for their deeds of valour and heroism. They occupied the first seat at all ceremonial darbars in Rajasthan under the British rule.

### **Bengal**

In addition to the Rajput kingdoms mentioned above, Bengal was a non-Rajput State in eastern India, ruled by Pala kings who were Buddhists. They did not claim descent from any Rajput clan. They were great warriors and conquered parts of Bihar also. For many years they waged wars against the Pratiharas of Kanauj and Rashtrakutas of Deccan for supremacy in northern India. Dharam Pal (780 to 815 A.D.) was one of their great rulers. About the end of the Twelfth Century the Pala dynasty was overthrown by the Senas who became

masters of Bengal. They ruled upto the beginning of the Thirteenth Century when they also fell victims to Muslim invasions. Ikhtiyar-Bin-Bakhtiar Khalji, one of the generals of Muhammad Ghori, conquered Bengal.

### **South India**

In the previous chapter we have read of the history of the States in the Deccan and far south. The important dynasties there were the Chalukyas, Pallavas, Rashtrakutas and Cholas. Of these the Chalukyas and Rashtrakutas were Rajputs.

## CHAPTER XV

# THE ARAB CONQUEST OF SIND

**A**RABIA is a fairly big country in south-west Asia, a large part being desert with oases here and there. Its people in mediaeval times were hardy and good sailors. They had been carrying on maritime trade with India for several centuries, some of them even settling in India, mainly along the western coast. Upto the Sixth Century A.D. these people did not believe in God and worshipped various forces of nature. It was among these people that a prophet was born.

### The rise of Islam

Islam, one of the major religions of the world, was born in this rugged country in the Seventh Century A.D. Hitherto its people had been idol worshippers. They were divided into various tribes who were frequently at war with one another.

## MUHAMMAD—FOUNDER OF ISLAM

### His early life

Muhammad, the founder of Islam, was born in Mecca in 570 A.D., in the Al Quraish tribe. His father had died before his birth and he lost his mother also when he was a child. He was brought up by his uncle. When he was a youngman he looked after his uncle's sheep and camels. There was nothing remarkable about him till he was 40 years old though he had a spiritual inclination from childhood.

One day while tending his uncle's sheep, he heard strange voices speaking to him. At first he did not pay much attention to them but they persisted. He was convinced that the voice were those of angels. They told him that there was a God, the creator of this universe, and that He had chosen him as His messenger. He should, therefore, go and tell the people that



they should cease worshipping idols and various forces of nature and instead pray to God alone. When he told his uncle and his friends of his experiences, they disbelieved him and made fun of him, saying that he was getting hallucinations.

But he believed in what the angels told him and was convinced that there was a God who had created everything in this world. The angels continued to speak to him and he made up his mind to fulfil the mission for which he had been chosen by God. He exhorted the people to give up idol worship and to worship God only. There was much opposition. The people were not prepared to give up their old beliefs and traditions. The opposition in Mecca was so great that he had to flee for his life to Medina in 622 A.D. This incident is known as "Hijrat" (Flight) in the history of Islam and is an important date as the Muslim era, known as A.H. (Anno Hijra) began in 622 A.D. In Medina he was received kindly. People listened to his teachings patiently and were convinced by him that there was a God. They accepted his message and his teachings. With their help he returned to Mecca and converted the people there to his faith. He died in 632 A.D.

The religion founded by Muhammad spread rapidly and in a short time, a large number of people adopted it. It was called Islam as it brought peace of mind to its followers.

### **The teachings of Islam**

Islam believed in the unity of God. God is one and there is no God except the one God who is the creator of this world and all that lives in it. Islam also believes in the equality of all men. In the eyes of God there are no distinctions between man and man and therefore all followers of Islam are brothers. Islam does not recognise caste distinctions. It believes that Muhammad was the apostle or prophet chosen by God to propagate the true faith.

### **The Caliphs**

After Muhammad's death there was a dispute about his successor. Some people wanted Ali, his son-in-law, to succeed him but the majority elected Abu Bakr as the first Caliph. He was succeeded by Omar and Osman. Ali was elected as the fourth Caliph. Those who had supported Ali initially refused

to recognise the first three caliphs as legitimate successors of Muhammad and hence the dispute between the two factions continued. They were ultimately divided into two sects, the Shias and the Sunnis. The former did not recognise the first three caliphs.

Under the dynamic leadership of the caliphs Islam spread far and wide, both in the east and the west. Its simplicity and the doctrine of equality and brotherhood appealed to a large number of people who readily adopted it.

### **Arab invasion of Sind**

Gradually the Arabs spread their religion to India also and Sind was the first province to receive the impact of Islam. At the time of Harsha's death (647 A.D.) Sind was ruled by a Buddhist monarch. In 650 A.D. Chach, a Brahmin minister, overthrew his master and founded a Brahmana dynasty. He was succeeded by Dahir, his son. Brahmana rule in Sind was unpopular as the Buddhists and some local chiefs were hostile to it. Such an atmosphere provided a suitable opportunity to the caliphs to renew their efforts to spread their influence and Islam into India.

### **Previous attempts**

Several attempts had been made in the past to conquer western India. A naval expedition was sent to Thana near Bombay in 637 A.D. but it was repulsed by Pulikesin II, the great Chalukya king. The second invasion was launched by land in 643-44 A.D. but it also proved a failure. The third expedition was organised under the leadership of Muhammad-Bin-Qasim in 712 A.D. This was successful.

### **Muhammad-Bin-Qasim's invasion (719 A.D.)—Its Causes**

For a long time the Arabs had wanted to conquer India and spread Islam. The dispute between Dahir and his subjects provided a very good opportunity to them to attempt an invasion for the third time. The Arabs were eager to conquer India because it also provided a lucrative market for their goods. The immediate cause of the invasion was the looting of Arab ships laden with presents, sent by the king of Ceylon, for the caliph. Pirates in Debal (modern Karachi) were res-

possible for this loot. This incident infuriated the caliph who demanded compensation from Dahir, the ruler of Sind but he declined to pay and also refused to take any action against the pirates, over whom he had no control. The caliph therefore asked Al Hajaj, Governor of Iraq, to invade Sind. The first expedition failed. Then Al Hajaj selected young and brave Muhammad-Bin-Qasim, his nephew and son-in-law, as leader.

#### **'Qasim's campaign**

He attacked Sind through Baluchistan and captured Debal. Then he marched along the right bank of the Indus and crossed it near Rawar where a bitter battle was fought with Dahir, who was killed. His brave queen Rani Bai continued the struggle but when there was no hope of victory she, along with other womenfolk, performed 'Jauhar'. The victorious Arabs then marched upon Alor, the capital, and captured it. Multan fell into their hands next and soon the whole of Sind was overrun and occupied by the Arabs.

The Arab victory was largely due to the treachery of the people of Sind to their ruler.

#### **Arab administration in Sind**

After the conquest of Sind the Arabs established a military administration. Land was distributed among Arab chiefs and soldiers. The Hindus were granted partial toleration if they agreed to pay Jazia tax. They were called 'Zimmis' and were not persecuted if they paid the Jazia. They were employed in large numbers in the revenue department but high posts were assigned only to the Arabs.

Having established their rule in Sind the Arabs tried to expand it but did not succeed.

#### **Causes of the Arab failure to expand their conquests**

There were several causes which contributed to their failure to expand their conquests. Muhammad-Bin-Qasim was a bold leader who could inspire his people but he soon incurred the displeasure of the caliph and was recalled and killed. His successors were not so capable and could not inspire their followers to conquer more territories. The caliphs also lost interest in further expansion in India as they were busy expand-

ing in the west. The Rajputs also played a significant part in successfully stopping further Arab expansion in India. The Chalukyas in the south and Pratiharas in the east checked their advance. Moreover, the Sind desert broke the Arab spirit of adventure. They had hoped that land in western India would be fertile but when they realised that it was as sandy as their own country they were not anxious to expand. For a long time Sind was ruled directly by the caliphs but in 871 A.D. rulers of Sind declared their independence. In course of time it was divided into two principalities, Multan and Mansurah.

### **Results of the invasion**

The Arab invasion and subsequent conquest of Sind influenced the rest of India directly and indirectly. Politically, the Arab conquest was an isolated event in the history of India, not affecting the rest of the country. Economically it further encouraged trade between India and the western world and considerably enriched the Arabs, who were great sailors and who had been carrying on maritime trade both with the east and the west. Culturally its impact on India was great. A large number of Sanskrit books were translated into Arabic. The Arabs studied Indian astronomy, mathematics and medicine. They learned the Indian numerals. These are still called the Arab numerals. Indian physicians were sent to Baghdad and it is said that one of them even cured the caliph of his ailments. Though the Rajput kings checked the political expansion of the Arabs, Muslims were allowed to settle in their States. They carried the message of Islam with them and succeeded in propagating it and converting a small minority of people.

### **Conclusion**

The influence of Islam was confined largely to Sind as a result of the Arab conquest. Its further progress was halted for about three centuries. It was only at the beginning of the Eleventh Century that the Muslims made another serious effort to conquer India. The invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni opened the gateway of India for a wider and permanent impact of Islam on the country.



## CHAPTER XVI

# THE MUSLIM CONQUEST OF INDIA

### **Invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad Ghori**

**T**HE Arab conquest of Sind only gave the Muslims a foothold in India. It did not open the gateway to further expansion of Muslim rule. Politically, it was a "triumph without result".

It was only when the Muslim invaders entered India through the Khyber pass in north-west India (now in Pakistan) that it was possible for them to accomplish the conquest of India. Two great warriors, namely, Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad Ghori, played a notable part in achieving this. The former paved the way to the conquest of India and exposed the weaknesses of the Rajput political system, while the latter completed the conquest of Hindustan and laid the foundation of Muslim rule in India. (We shall read about their achievements in the succeeding pages.)

### MAHMUD OF GHAZNI

#### **Early history of the House of Ghazni**

Alaptgin, an ambitious slave of Abdul Malik, ruler of Central Asia, made himself the independent chief of Ghazni in the second half of the Tenth Century. He also conquered parts of Kabul. He died in 963 A.D. Ishak, his son, succeeded him but he was an incompetent ruler and was deposed by Subaktgin, the son-in-law of Alaptgin, who ruled from 977 to 997 A.D. He expanded the empire of Ghazni at the cost of his eastern neighbour Jaipal, the king of Punjab and Kabul conquering the districts of Lamghan (territory between Peshawar and Kabul).

#### **Early life of Mahmud**

Mahmud (997 to 1030 A.D.), his son and successor was born

in 971 A.D. From his childhood he dreamt of invading India to loot its vast wealth. He had heard numerous stories of India's riches from the people of the caravans who carried on trade with India. When he ascended the throne in 997 A.D. he carried out his ambition and invaded India 17 times.

### **Causes of his invasions**

Mahmud was an adventurer and a great warrior. He delighted in warfare and wanted to conquer distant lands, one of his ambitions being to invade India. He was also anxious to amass wealth and since he had heard of the fabulous riches of Indian temples, he wanted to loot them. With this wealth he wanted to build a magnificent court in Ghazni. Some historians say that he invaded India to spread Islam and to break the Hindu idols but this is debatable. Since he razed many temples to the ground and broke their idols and looted them, some historians have concluded that his object was purely religious and he wanted to be called a 'Ghazi', a destroyer of infidels or idol worshippers. Perhaps his chief motive was loot and since Hindu temples were store-houses of gold, silver and precious stones he made them the target of his invasion.

### **Some important invasions**

During his reign of 33 years, he carried out no fewer than 17 invasions of India. Every time he came he penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of India and was never defeated. All his invasions were successful, that is why he is regarded as one of the greatest conquerors of the world. A brief account of his chief invasions follows.

#### **1. Against Jaipal : 1001 A.D.**

The Shahiya dynasty ruled over Punjab and Kabul. Its rulers were hereditary enemies of the Sultans of Ghazni. In the reign of Subaktgin, Jaipal was ruling in Punjab and Kabul. (We have read earlier in this chapter how Sabuktgin defeated him). Jaipal was captured and set free only on condition that he would pay a heavy ransom. His Rajput pride was terribly hurt and he felt humiliated. Therefore, he committed suicide by burning himself.

## 2. Struggle with Anandpal : 1008 to 1009 A.D.

Mahmud once again attacked the Punjab where Anandpal, son and successor of Jaipal, ruled. Anandpal had raised a powerful Rajput coalition to fight against Mahmud. The Rajputs fought well and hard and inflicted severe reverses on the Muslim invaders but when victory was within sight, Anandpal's elephant was wounded and ran from the battlefield. This was a turning point in the fortune of the battle. The Rajputs thought that their leader was fleeing and so they lost heart and also fled. Mahmud was again victorious. He then marched upon the rich temple of Nagakot (Kangra) and ransacked it. He plundered much booty and carried camel loads of it to Ghazni.

## Mauthra and Kanauj : 1018—1019 A.D.

The temples of Mauthra and Kanauj were extremely rich and attracted Mahmud's attention. Mauthra did not offer much opposition and a large number of temples was looted. Rajyapal Parihar, ruler of Kanauj, first decided to give battle to Mahmud but later became panicky and fled. He even accepted Mahmud's overlordship. The temples of Kanauj were sacked by the invaders and a substantial amount of booty was carried back to Ghazni.

## Kalinjar : 1020—1023 A.D.

The Rajputs were terribly annoyed with Rajyapal Parihar for accepting Mahmud's sizerainty. Therefore, Ganda, the Chandela Raja of Bundelkhand, invaded Kanauj to teach Rajyapal a lesson. When Mahmud heard of this, he was roused to anger because his vassal had been attacked. He marched against Ganda to punish him. On seeing the host of Muslim invaders Ganda took fright and fled the battlefield.

## Somnath : 1025—1026 A.D.

By far the most famous and daring invasion of Mahmud was that of Somnath, one of the richest temples of India, in Kathiawar. Mahmud had heard of its immense wealth and was determined to acquire it. Therefore, at the head of a large army, he marched through the Punjab and Rajasthan and appeared before the gates of Somnath. The Rajputs knew of

his invasion and raised a big alliance to fight him and defend their sacred temple. A bitter struggle followed. But in the end Mahmud was again victorious. When he entered the temple he was dazed at the sight of the huge idol. It is said that the "Pandas" of the temple beseeched him to spare the idol, offering him a fabulous amount of wealth in return, but Mahmud, who was an ardent Muslim, would not agree to do so. He would rather be an idol breaker than an idol seller. He therefore broke the idol which was hollow and from it flowed numerous precious stones. An immense booty thus fell into Mahmud's hands. Never before had he collected such wealth. He returned to Ghazni through Sind with camel loads of booty. It is said that on his return journey, a "Panda" of the temple disguised as a guide offered his services to lead the Ghazni army by the shortest route back to Ghazni. He led them into the Sind desert where Mahmud's army had to suffer much on account of lack of water and many of them died. When Mahmud learnt the identity of his guide, he executed him.

The invasion of Somnath was the last great invasion undertaken by Mahmud.

### Results of the invasions

Mahmud's real aim in invading India was not to conquer it. His invasions were carried out more in the nature of raids to collect booty. The annexation of the Punjab was only an indirect result of these invasions. He marched through it so often on his way to various targets that its government was completely paralysed and it fell into his hands consequently. The main object of these invasions was to loot the rich temples of India. During the 17 invasions he amassed a vast amount of wealth and considerably impoverished India. With all this wealth, he beautified Ghazni and set up a brilliant court adorned by some of the great scholars of his age.

Another result of these invasions was that they completely exposed the weaknesses of the Rajputs. They were terribly divided and could not be united even in the face of a common danger. This disunity was one of the major causes of their defeat. Even when they united their unity was short-lived and dissensions arose over leadership while the battle was on. The



invasions also paved the way for the final conquest of India by the Muslims. The Arab invasion and the conquest of Sind was an isolated event, the rest of India not being affected by it politically. But Mahmud's success in northern India opened the gateway to further and permanent conquest of Hindustan by the Muslim armies under Muhammad Ghori towards the end of the Twelfth Century.

#### **Assessment of Mahmud's character**

He was no doubt one of the greatest warriors and conquerors of all times. He was a born leader of men and could inspire them with courage and confidence. He carried out 17 successful invasions of India. In addition to his conquests in the east, he also conquered large territories in the west and was never defeated. His unbroken record of victories certainly entitles him to rank among the great conquerors of the world. However, he was purely a conqueror and did not possess the genius of an administrator. As a result of his invasions he overran large territories but he made no satisfactory arrangements for their governance. That is why soon after his death his empire began to fall. Another major characteristic of Mahmud was his greed. The chief aim of his invasions was loot. He collected a large booty from India but was not prepared to spend it lightly as was evident from his treatment of Firdausi (about whom we shall read a little later).

It is said that before his death he wanted to have a last look at his riches and that when he died his eyes still remained opened, perhaps still gazing at them! Mahmud was also famous for his justice, making no distinction between the powerful and the weak. Even the greatest nobles were not spared if they were found guilty. Those in authority were, therefore, afraid of him and were not allowed to oppress his subjects.

Mahmud was also a great builder. The wealth amassed in India was fruitfully utilised in constructing palaces, mosques, schools and such like. Ghazni was beautified ranking among the foremost cities of the Muslim world.

Another aspect of his character was his great love of art and literature. Invaluable pieces of art were collected and brought to Ghazni. He was also a patron of learning and some of the

greatest scholars of his time adorned his court. Al Beruni was a noted historian, mathematician and philosopher. Utbi was a famous historian. But by far the most important scholar of his court was Firdausi, a renowned Persian poet. He was commissioned to write the history of Persia in verse and was promised a gold "mohar" for each verse. After years of hard work he produced a book called "Shah Nama" (Book of Kings) with 60,000 couplets. It is one of the masterpieces of Persian poetry. Mahmud was delighted at this achievement. Firdausi claimed his reward. The other Persian poets such as Unsuri, the poet laureate, were jealous of Firdausi's achievement and poisoned the mind of Mahmud who went back on his word. Instead of rewarding Firdausi with gold 'mohars' he only offered him silver pieces. Firdausi's pride was hurt; he would not accept silver in place of gold. He wrote a satire on Mahmud and fled to his home town in Koorasan. When Mahmud heard the satire recited he felt sorry for breaking his promise and sent 60,000 gold pieces. Alas! they arrived too late for Firdausi had died earlier in the day.

### Conclusions

Mahmud's military exploits and conquests constitute a glorious chapter in the history of Islam. They opened the way for the permanent conquest of Hindustan under Muhammad Ghori.

### MUHAMMAD GHORI

Ghor, in the mountainous region of Afghanistan, was part of the Ghaznavide Empire. Its princes were feudatories of the House of Ghazni. Towards the middle of the Twelfth Century, the Ghaznavide Empire began to break up and when the central authority became weak the governors of Ghor overthrew the yoke of the Ghaznavide Sultans and set up an independent kingdom. One of these princes, named Ghayas-ud-Din Muhammad, even occupied Ghazni in 1173 A.D. He appointed his younger brother named Shahab-ud-Din, better known as Muhammad Ghori, as governor of the conquered territories. The two brothers loved each other and there was perfect understanding between them. Muhammad Ghori was

allowed a free hand by his elder brother in extending his empire.

### **Political condition of India on the eve of Muhammad Ghori's invasions**

India was divided into a number of small States among whom there was tremendous rivalry and jealousy. Petty quarrels led to frequent inter-state warfare. No single State was strong enough to claim overlordship over others. Hence political conditions were very favourable for an adventurer to attack and conquer Hindustan. The chief States in northern India at this time were Bengal, Bihar, Bundelkhand, Kanauj, Punjab, Sind, Gujarat and Delhi. Bengal was ruled by the Sena dynasty which had defeated the Palas and grasped power. The Palas still ruled in Bihar though they had become considerably weak on account of the loss of Bengal. Bundelkhand was ruled by Chandelas and Bundelas. Their strongholds were Mahoba and Kalinjar. The most important State in northern India was Kanauj. It had been one of the most famous cities of northern India, acquiring great importance from the days of Harsha. The Pratihara Rajputs ruled there for about four centuries but they were defeated by the Rathors or Gaharwars and at the time of Muhammad Ghori's invasion, Jai Chand Rathor ruled there. It was still one of the most powerful States and Jai Chand was highly respected among the Rajputs.

Delhi, another equally important State in northern India, was ruled by the Chauhans and at this time Prithvi Raj was its ruler. Originally the Chauhans were rulers of Ajmer but Prithvi Raj's grandfather had conquered Delhi also.

There was tremendous rivalry between the rulers of Kanauj and Delhi for several reasons. First Jai Chand was jealous of Prithvi Raj's greatness. Most Rajput rulers regarded Prithvi Raj as their leader and this offended Jai Chand. Secondly, their relations became worse when Prithvi Raj abducted Sanyokta (Sanjogta), daughter of Jai Chand, from her Swayamvar. Jai Chand had invited all eligible young Rajput princes except Prithvi Raj Chauhan to it. In order to humiliate Prithvi Raj, he placed his statue at the door of the great hall where the Swayamvar was to be held. This statue acted as 'durban'. Prithvi Raj and Sanyokta had never met each

other but they had learnt of each other's great qualities through various sources. Sanyokta admired the bravery of Prithvi Raj and the latter her beauty. They were secretly in love with each other. It had been arranged between them that Prithvi Raj would come to the swayamvar in disguise and carry her away. The plot had been carefully planned. Prithvi Raj reached the palace at Kanauj with a band of sturdy followers in disguise and waited outside in the compound. The princes who had been invited to the Swayamvar assembled in the hall. Sanyokta came with a garland in her hand, looked at the various princes and, in her mind, rejected them all. She moved on to the other end of the hall and then came out of the door and garlanded the statue of Prithvi Raj. At this moment, Prithvi Raj, who was close by, rushed forward, picked her up and rode away followed by his band of faithful Rajput soldiers. Jai Chand was taken by surprise. He was not prepared for this situation. It was too late for him to chase Prithvi Raj, who had already taken a good lead and who successfully reached his capital with his prize. This incident further embittered the relations between the rulers of Kanauj and Delhi.

Punjab had already become a part of the Ghazni Empire as a result of the invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni in the Eleventh Century. At this time its governor was Khusrau Malik. Sind had been conquered in the beginning of the Eighth Century by the Arabs who still ruled there.

Thus we see that northern India, towards the end of the Twelfth Century, was ruled by a number of princes, big and small, who were constantly at war with one another. Muhammad Ghori who had the ambition of conquering India, took full advantage of the political conditions and invaded India in 1191 A.D.

### **Causes of the invasion**

Muhammad Ghori was an ambitious and warlike prince. He wanted to build a Muslim empire in India. Moreover, he wanted to carry the message of Islam to new lands. He believed that with conquest of Hindustan, Islam was bound to spread in India as it had spread in the west. Since political conditions in India were favourable he led a number of expeditions into India. He first attacked Multan, which was then ruled by the



Arabs, in 1175-76 A.D. He defeated them and captured Uch. He next led a campaign against Khusrau Malik in 1186 A.D., deposed and imprisoned him.

### **Struggle with Prithvi Raj Chauhan :**

#### **The Battles of Tarain**

After conquering Punjab, Muhammad Ghori turned his attention to the Rajput States. At the head of a large army he marched against Prithvi Raj Chauhan. A grim battle took place at Tarain in 1191 A.D. Muhammad Ghori was wounded and if he had not been helped by his nobles, he would have been captured. They succeeded in carrying him away from the battlefield. Muhammad Ghori made better preparations and returned to battle with Prithvi Raj again and avenge his defeat at the first battle of Tarain. On the eve of this second battle of Tarain (1192 A.D.) Jai Chand was successful in influencing several Rajput princes, persuading them not to support Prithvi Raj. A fierce battle was fought at Tarain. Prithvi Raj was defeated and killed and Muhammad Ghori became the master of Delhi. He later attacked Ajmer and conquered it also. Some historians allege that Prithvi Raj Chauhan was captured and taken prisoner of war but this seems doubtful.

It was the turn of Kanauj next. Jai Chand, who had so far kept himself aloof from the struggle between the Muslims and the Rajputs, was the next victim of Muhammad Ghori. He also was defeated and his kingdom was annexed by Muhammad Ghori in 1194 A.D. The Rathors fled Kanauj and founded the State of Jodhpur in Rajasthan.

#### **Further conquests**

Having defeated the most powerful Rajput chiefs in northern India and annexing a major part of it, Muhammad Ghori appointed Qutub-ud-Din Aibak as his Viceroy in Hindustan. It was under his able leadership that further conquests were carried out by the Muslims. Gwalior was conquered in 1196 A.D., Gujarat plundered in 1197 A.D. and the princes of Bundelkhand were overthrown in 1302-03 A.D. Another leader General Ikhtiyar-Bin Bakhtiyar Khalji, led the campaign into Bihar and Bengal and defeated the Palas and Senas respectively. With the annexation of eastern States, the conquest of northern India

was completed by Muhammad Ghori and his lieutenants.

Muhammad Ghori died in 1206 A.D. and on his death Qutub-ud-Din Aibak proclaimed himself as the first independent Muslim ruler of Hindustan and founded the Slave dynasty. (We shall read about this later.)

### Causes of Muslim success

The Rajputs were great warriors and they had large armies. How was it that they were overthrown by comparatively lesser forces of invaders on their home grounds? It will be interesting to analyse the causes of Rajput defeat.

The foremost cause of the defeat of the Rajputs was the petty rivalries and jealousies among the Rajput princes. There was complete lack of unity and they would go to war with one another for flimsy reasons. They learnt no lesson from the invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni in the early Eleventh Century and even in the face of a common danger they failed to unite and put up a stiff opposition to the invaders. The rivalry between Prithvi Raj and Jai Chand was largely responsible for the defeat of these two great rulers at the hands of Muhammad Ghori.

Another factor which contributed to the Hindu defeat was their social organisation. They were divided into a number of castes and sub-castes. Only the Kshatriyas were regarded as a warrior caste. The others were not interested in fighting or defending their country. Because of the caste distinction and mutual rivalries, Hindu society was hopelessly divided.

The third cause was lack of patriotism among the Hindus. There was no sense of loyalty or love for the country. Soldiers fought only for their leader and the moment he was defeated, killed or fled, the army also fled. Their fidelity was confined only to the ruler and not to the country. Even the general masses of people were not loyal to the king. It did not matter to them at all who their ruler was.

Fourthly, the striking military power of the Rajputs was not as effective as that of the Muslim invaders. The Rajputs had big armies, a large proportion of which was untrained. They also depended too much on elephants but when these were wounded they ran back and caused considerable havoc and chaos among their own soldiers. Moreover, the elephants were

slow to move about and the Rajput leaders therefore could not easily shift from one sector of the battlefield to another. As opposed to this slow-moving and ill-trained army the Muslims had a trained band of soldiers and a very efficient cavalry which moved much faster and therefore inflicted more casualties on the Indian armies.

Lastly, the Muslims were a united people. One of the teachings of Islam was equality and spirit of brotherhood among all Muslims. These two basic traits ensured unity and solidarity among them. On the contrary the Rajputs were terribly disunited. The Muslims fought with missionary zeal. They knew well that if they were defeated it would not be possible for them to reach their homes safely. Therefore, their motto was "Do or Die". This spirit gave them extra energy and will to win.

#### **Assessment of Muhammad Ghori's character**

He was a great warrior and conqueror and established a large Muslim empire in northern India. He was an inspiring military leader, under whom the soldiers were prepared to face the gravest danger successfully. He was also an able administrator. Whatever territories he conquered were administered properly. He established a sound system of government. Though he was not a scholar himself, he patronised art and literature.

#### **Comparison between Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad Ghori**

It will be interesting to compare the achievements of Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad Ghori, the two great warriors and conquerors, whose invasions had a very deep impact on Hindustan,

First, there is no doubt that both were great military leaders. But Mahmud was certainly the greater of the two, as he was never defeated on the battlefield. Muhammad Ghori lost the first battle of Tarain.

Secondly, Mahmud was no administrator. He was only an invader and therefore his conquests were only temporary. On the other hand, Muhammad Ghori was a capable administrator and organiser and made sure that the States he conquered were ruled properly. He established an efficient system of government and therefore his conquests were of a permanent nature.

He was virtually responsible for establishing Muslim rule in India which lasted for several centuries.

Thirdly, Mahmud himself was a great scholar. He patronised learning and art and was responsible for attracting the best scholars and artists of his age to his court. On the other hand, Muhammad Ghori was essentially a soldier though he tried to encourage art and literature.

### **Conclusions**

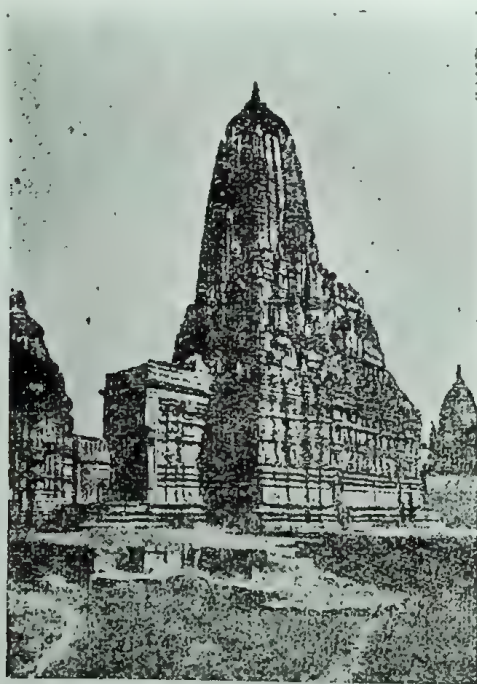
Both Mahmud and Muhammad Ghori were great conquerors. The former exposed the weaknesses of Hindu Rajas by final conquest of Hindustan by Muhammad Ghori.



## CHAPTER XVII

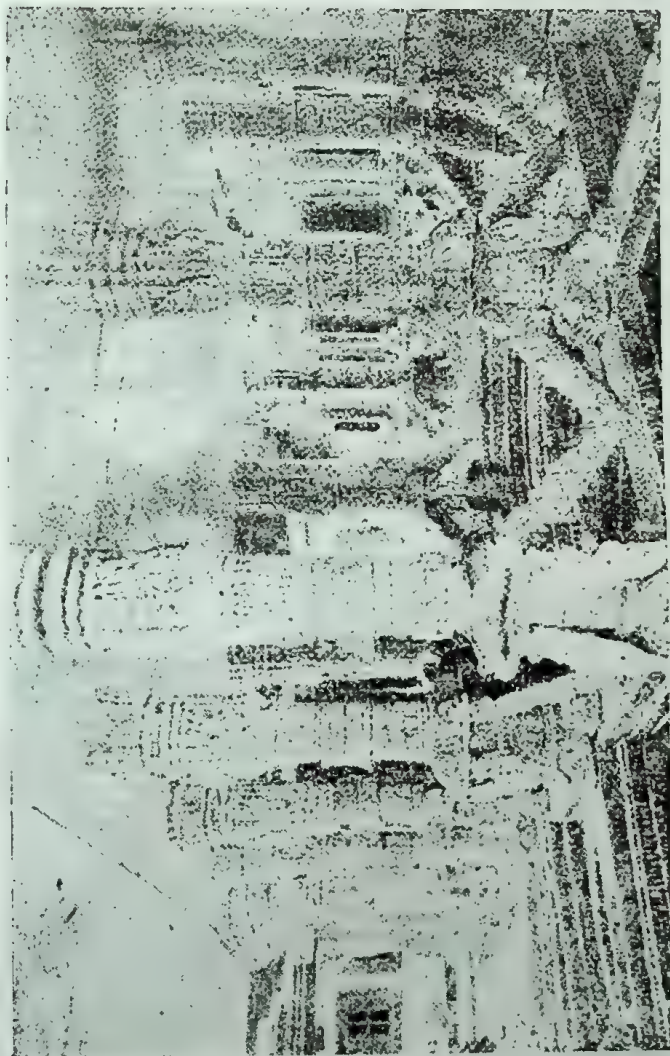
# INDIAN CULTURE AND COLONIES ABROAD

INDIA had intercourse with many countries of the East and West from early times. It was never isolated from the rest of the world. Even in the Stone Age the Indians had relations with the Far East; a number of them migrated to Indo-China and the Malay Archipelago.



*Temple of Parasnath, Khajuraho*

*Interior Tejpal's Temple, Mount Abu*



The people of the Indus Valley Civilisation also had contacts with countries in the West and Central Asia. Numerous seals have been found in the Middle East which are similar to those found in the Indus Valley. This shows that either the Indus Valley Civilisation extended upto the Middle East or the Middle East Civilisation was similar to the Indus Valley Civilisation or there was intercourse between the two.

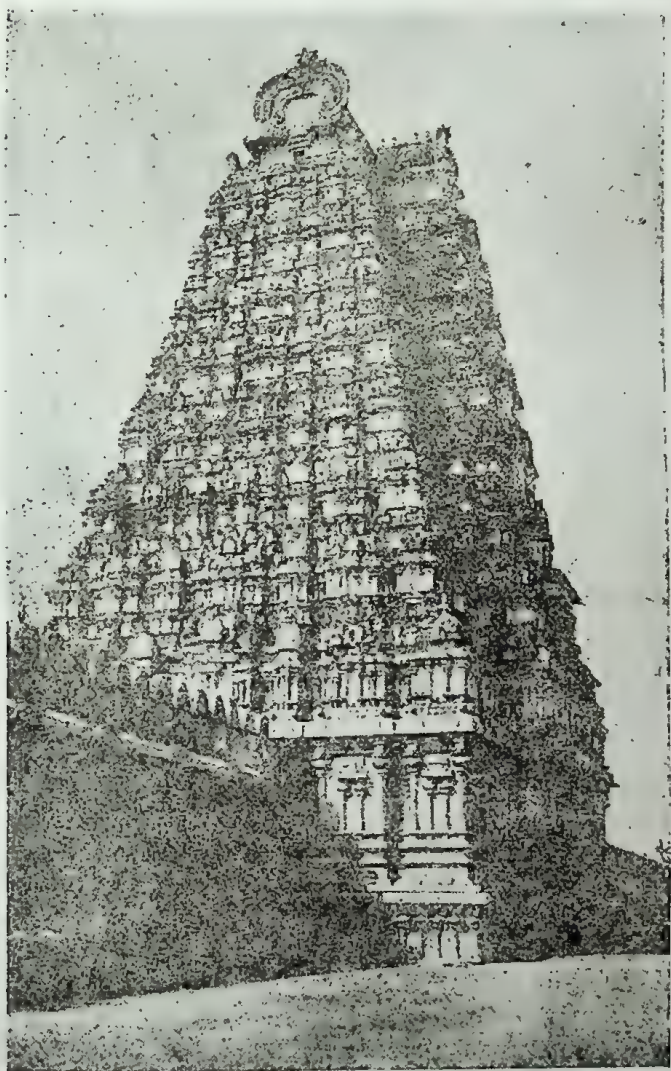
The Aryans were foreigners and when they came and conquered India, for quite some time, they continued to have contacts and relations with their ancestral homes and with those Aryans who had migrated to other countries.

In addition, relations with foreign countries led to the expansion of Indian culture and the spread of Indian religions abroad. Several colonies were also established, but it must be remembered that India was a colonial power of a different kind from the other colonial powers of the world. First, the colonies founded by Indians abroad were never ruled from India and did not form part of only Indian State. Modern colonies are governed by their masters sitting thousands of miles away and are parts of their empire.



*Colossal Horse, Konark.*

Secondly, India never exploited them for her own benefit, while modern colonial powers acquired colonies mainly for exploitation.



*Srirangam Temple*



India's relations with the outside world were basically commercial and cultural. We shall discuss them in three different sections: relations with the West, relations with Central Asia and relations with the Far East.

### SECTION A : RELATIONS WITH THE WEST

Indians were good sailors and carried on trade with countries in the West. They sold pearls, precious stones, spices and cloth in the markets of Southern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. Indian goods, particularly muslin, were popular in Rome. This maritime trade brought a good deal of money to the Indian merchants. Along with trade, their contact with foreign countries was responsible for spreading Indian culture, religions and languages. Under Asoka, a number of Buddhist missions were sent to several western countries. Though Buddhism was not accepted widely in the West, Buddhist teachings were fully appreciated in that region.

In the Seventh and Eighth Centuries, the Arabs monopolised a good deal of maritime trade and began to carry Indian goods to western countries. As a result of their contact with India, they learnt Indian philosophy, mathematics, and medicine and spread them in western countries. The use of zero in mathematics was learnt by the Arabs from India and they in turn taught it to the Europeans.

In the west the main contribution of India was essentially commercial.

### SECTION B : CENTRAL ASIA

There was a good deal of expansion of Indian culture in this region. Asoka sent several Buddhist missions to Central Asian kingdoms to propagate the teachings of Buddhism. Later under the Kushan kings who ruled over a fairly large portion of Central Asia also, Buddhism spread rapidly, particularly under Kanishka. Along with it Indian culture and Sanskrit also spread. From Central Asia, Buddhism spread to China, Korea, Tibet and monasteries were constructed there. Side by side with cultural expansion trade also developed but in Central Asia cultural influence was more pronounced than commercial. When Hiuen Tsan visited India he noticed the influence of Indian culture in the countries through which he travelled.

## SECTION C : THE FAR EAST

The spirit of maritime adventure prompted Indian sailors to go to the Far East. India had a highly developed ship building industry and built a large number of ports, both on the eastern and western coasts. Indian ships with Indian traders sailed to Malaya, Java, Sumatra and other islands in the Far East. Their objective was to spread Indian culture and civilisation among the primitive people therein. They also wanted to expand their trade because it yielded much profit. This region was rich in spices and trade in this commodity was lucrative. In the First and Second Centuries A.D. trade between these parts of the world had brought much wealth to the merchants and consequently the Indians began to call these islands "Swarnbhumi" or the "Land of Gold".

From the Second Century A.D. onwards, certain adventurous Indian princes who were deprived of their kingdoms in India by foreign invaders or internal strife, sailed to the Far East and succeeded in establishing new States there. This was the beginning of the foundation of Indian colonies in Indo-China and the Malay Archipelago. With the establishment of Indian States, both Brahmanism and Buddhism, spread more rapidly in this region. A number of temples were constructed. They are some of the finest specimens of Indian architecture.

## SOME IMPORTANT COLONIES

### I. Indo-China

There was two colonies in Indo-China, Champa and Kambuja.

#### (a) Champa or Annam

It was colonised in the Second Century A.D. We do not know much about its history till the Tenth Century when it became a powerful kingdom under Jaya Parmesvara Varma Deva, who ruled from 1050 to 1060 A.D. He was succeeded by several great rulers, Jaya Simha Varman, who ruled from 1257 to 1287 A.D., being the last. After him the State was invaded by its western neighbours, the Kambujas and later it was conquered by the Mongols under Kublai Khan.

**(b) Kambujas or Cambodia**

Founded in the First Century A.D., its early history is rather obscure. The Chinese called it Funan. It was a great Hindu kingdom and lasted upto the Fifteenth Century when it was overrun by the Annamites and the Thais. Later it became a French protectorate.

With the establishment of Indian rule, Indian culture and religions were adopted by the people. The Kambuja rulers built several beautiful temples. Among them the temple of Angkor-Vat, built by Surya Varman II in the Twelfth century, is one of the most magnificent temples of the world. Dedicated to Vishnu, it is built in the Dravidian style, with a number of terraces, spires and towers and a large number of excellent pieces of sculpture adorn its walls. Angkor Thom was the capital, where the grand temple of Bayon with a number of gates and towers, was built. It was a magnificent city with beautiful buildings, tanks and parks.

**II. Malay Archipelago**

The Indians established colonies in Java, Sumatra, Bali and Borneo. Indian culture in these parts has left a deep and powerful impression on the people.

**(a) Java**

Java was one of the earliest Hindu colonies. It was probably founded in the First Century A.D. When Fa Hian visited the island in the early Fifth Century Hinduism flourished there. The cult of both Shiva and Vishnu was followed by the people. In the Eighth Century the Sailendra kings established their authority in Java. They were Buddhists and under them Buddhism became the chief religion of the people. They constructed several beautiful stupas. Among them the stupa of Barabundur on the top of a hill, with terraces and elegant sculptures is the most magnificent.

**(b) Sumatra**

It was another Hindu colony ruled in the beginning by the Sri Vijaya dynasty. In the Eighth Century it was overrun and conquered by the Sailendras of Java.

**(c) Bali**

It was yet another Hindu colony and even to this day many

traits of Hindu civilisation prevail on this small island.

**(d) Borneo**

It was probably colonised by the Hindus in the First Century A.D.

**Sailendra dynasty**

In due course of time the Sailendra dynasty extended its sway over Java, Sumatra, Bali and Borneo. The rulers called themselves Maharajas. They built a powerful navy and carried on a lucrative trade with foreign countries. They were also great patrons of Buddhism. In the Eleventh Century there was a bitter struggle between them and the Cholas of South India. They were temporarily defeated by Rajendra Chola but soon after they regained supremacy. In the Thirteenth Century A.D. their empire collapsed.

About the Sixteenth Century A.D. Islam spread rapidly in these colonies and a large number of people, including the rulers, accepted it, though traces of Hindu culture still persist.

**Conclusion**

Indian expansion abroad was responsible for several far-reaching results. Indian civilisation spread far and wide and a large number of primitive people, particularly in the Far East, were civilised in the early Christian Era. Indian religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, expanded far beyond the borders of India. Though Buddhism has practically disappeared from the land of Buddha's birth, it is still practised and followed by a large number of people in China, Korea, Japan, Tibet and the Far East.

Indian literature also spread far and wide and many books in Indian languages were translated into foreign languages. The development of Indian art also in these countries was phenomenal. Magnificent Hindu and Buddhist temples, stupas and monasteries are a tribute to the glorification of Indian art in these countries.

Trade between India and the colonies enriched Indian merchants, who side by side with the development of trade were also instrumental in spreading Indian culture and religions abroad. As a result of trade with these regions, India became a rich country, a virtual "Land of Gold".



## CHAPTER XVIII

### FOUNDATION OF THE SULTANATE

In Chapter XVI, we have read how the Muslims invaded India and gradually established their empire in northern India. The first among the Muslims were the Arabs who invaded and conquered Sind in the beginning of the Eighth Century A.D. But Arab rule was confined only to Sind. Further attempts of expansion were thwarted by the Rajputs. The next Muslim invader was Mahmud of Ghazni who carried out 17 invasions from 997 to 1030 A.D. The invasions were more in the nature of raids, with the object of looting Indian wealth. But incidentally he also conquered and annexed the Punjab. The most important aspect of Mahmud's invasions was that he exposed the weaknesses of the Rajput princes and paved the way for the subsequent conquest of India by Muhammad Ghori in the last decade of the Twelfth Century.

We have already read how Muhammad Ghori defeated Prithvi Raj at the second battle of Tarain in 1192 A.D. and Jai Chand, ruler of Kanauj, in 1194 A.D. and how his lieutenants subsequently conquered the rest of northern India. By 1206 A.D. the whole of Hindustan had become part of the Muslim empire of Ghor.

Immediately after the second battle of Tarain, Muhammad Ghori appointed Qutub-ud-Din Aibak as his Viceroy in Hindustan. He was a shrewd and competent person and through matrimonial alliances with other powerful chiefs he strengthened his position. He himself married the daughter of Taj-ud-Din Yaloz, gave his sister in marriage to Nasir-ud-Din Qubaicha, and married his daughter to Ilutmash, Governor of Badaun.

On the death of Muhammad Ghori, he declared his independence and established the first independent Muslim kingdom in northern India. The period of Indian history from 1206 to

1526 A.D. is called the "Sultanate", because the rulers of Hindustan assumed the title of Sultan. During this period five dynasties, one after another, ruled over northern India. They were the Slaves (1206 to 1290 A.D.), the Khaljis (1290 to 1320 A.D.), the Tughluqs (1320 to 1413 A.D.), the Sayyads (1414 to 1451 A.D.) and the Lodis (1451 to 1526 A.D.).

In the following chapters we shall discuss their difficulties, their achievements and failures.

### **The Slave Dynasty: 1206 A.D. to 1290 A.D.**

Muhammad Ghorī succeeded his elder brother, Ghayas-ud-Din, as Sultan of Ghazni in 1203 A.D. He was faced with a number of problems both in the west and in India. In the Punjab, the Khokhars gave him a lot of trouble and though he succeeded in suppressing them, he was murdered by one of them in 1206 A.D. He had no male heir and therefore, after his death, his dominions were divided among his generals. Taj-ud-Din Yalduz ascended the throne of Ghazni. Qutub-ud-Din Aibak proclaimed his independence in Hindustan and established himself as the first independent Muslim ruler in India. He was the founder of the Slave dynasty whose rulers belonged to Turkish stock. Indian leaders including Nasir-ud-Din Qubaicha, Governor of Sind, and Ikhtiyar Bin Bakhtiyar Khalji, Governor of Bengal, accepted his suzerainty.

### **Qutub-ud-Din Aibak : 1206-1210 A.D.**

#### **His early life**

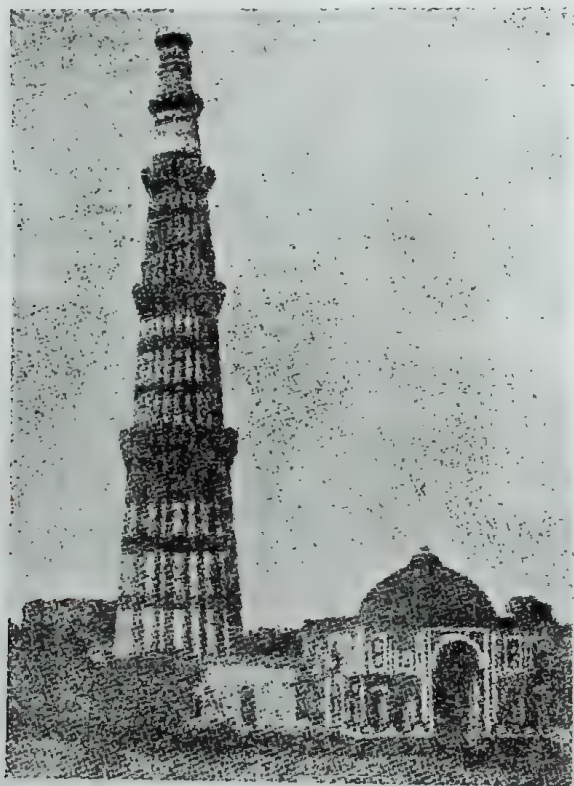
Qutub-ud-Din Aibak was captured early in life and was a victim of slavery in Turkestan. He was purchased by Qazi Fakhr-ud-Din of Nishapur who educated him and gave him military and administrative training along with his sons. After the Qazi's death, Aibak was sold to a merchant who brought him to Ghazni where he was purchased by Muhammad Ghorī. He was a brave and dashing soldier and an able administrator. By sheer dint of merit, he rose higher and higher and so pleased his master that he was set free. In appreciation of his services to the Sultan he was appointed Viceroy of Hindustan in 1212 A.D., immediately after the second battle of Tarain. On the death of Muhammad Ghorī, he proclaimed his independence.

Historians have called the dynasty founded by him as the

Slave dynasty because he started his political career as a slave, though by the time he ascended the throne he had been made a free man. Only three Sultans of his dynasty, namely, Qutub-ud-Din Aibak, Iltutmash and Balban, were originally slaves. But by the time they ascended the throne, they had been freed. The other rulers of the dynasty were born princes.

#### **His difficulties and how he solved them**

From the very beginning of his reign, he was threatened on all sides by rival Turkish chiefs. Taj-ud-Din Yaldoz, the ruler of Ghazni contested his claim for mastery of Hindustan and marched into the Punjab. Qutub-ud-Din, however, drove him away and even captured Ghazni for 45 days. But his atrocities



*Qutab Minar*

made him very unpopular. The people were disgusted with him and invited Taj-ud-Din Yaldoz again. The latter's sudden arrival took Qutub-ud-Din by surprise and he had to flee. Ghazni was lost to Aibak for good.

In order to commemorate the victory of the Muslim arms in India, he started building the Qutub Minar in Delhi but could not complete it because of his sudden death in 1210 A.D. as a result of a fall while playing polo at Lahore.

### **His character and achievements**

He was a great warrior and was primarily responsible for the conquest of Hindustan. He was extremely generous and was popularly known as "Lakh Bakhsh". He was frank and just and even the strong and powerful Sultans were afraid of him. He was an able administrator and established peace and prosperity in his dominions. He was a zealous Musalman and built two mosques, one at Delhi and the other at Ajmer.

### **Aram Shah : 1210 A.D.**

He was succeeded by Aram Shah. Some historians say he was the son of Qutub-ud-Din Aibak, others hold that he was only an adopted son, and yet others call him a brother. Some even hold that he was no relation of Qutub-ud-Din and was elevated to the throne by the nobles. He was an utterly worthless prince and not qualified to rule, particularly at a time when the Sultanate was faced with difficulties all round. The nobles therefore decided to depose him and invited Iltutmash, son-in-law of Qutub-ud-Din Aibak, to ascend the throne. Iltutmash had no difficulty in defeating Aram Shah and capturing the throne.

### **Shamus-ud-Din Iltutmash : 1210-1226 A.D.**

Like Qutub-ud-Din Aibak, his master, Iltutmash also was originally a slave. He belonged to the Ilbari tribe of Turkestan and was handsome and clever in boyhood. His brothers were jealous of him and so they sold him into slavery. He was purchased by Qutub-ud-Din Aibak who recognised his worth. On account of his services to Muhammad Ghori, particularly in the Punjab campaign against the Khokhars, he was set free. He rose to high positions and became Governor of Badaun,



one of the most important cities in northern India then. He was married to Qutub-ud-Din's daughter.

### **His difficulties and how he solved them**

Having ascended the throne he was beset with difficulties on all sides. He was a brave and able man and got ready to solve them one by one.

### **Opposition of Qutubi nobles**

Some Amirs were still loyal to the House of Qutub-ud-Din and regarded Iltutmash as a usurper. They put up opposition against him but he had no difficulty in defeating them.

### **Struggle with Yaldoz**

Taj-ud-Din Yaldoz, the Sultan of Ghazni, was ambitious and had not given up his dreams of becoming the Sultan of Hindustan also. He would not accept Iltutmash as Sultan of Hindustan and, therefore, marched into the Punjab. There was a bitter struggle between him and Iltutmash but the latter decisively defeated him near Tarain in 1216 A.D. and captured and imprisoned him in Badaun. His defeat and imprisonment removed a very formidable rival, as Iltutmash was now free to deal with other nobles.

### **Struggle with Qubaicha**

Nasir-ud-Din Qubaicha, Governor of Sind, was also ambitious. He contested Iltutmash's claim to the throne, marched into the Punjab and captured Lahore. He was driven back in 1217 A.D. but the struggle against him was long drawn. He continued to give trouble to Iltutmash upto 1228 A.D. when he was drowned in the Indus.

### **Hostility of Khalji Maliks**

The last of the Amirs to give him trouble were the Khalji Maliks of Bengal who refused to recognise him as Sultan and declared their independence but Iltutmash was not the man to take such defections lightly. He marched against them and defeated them in 1230-31 A.D. They accepted his suzerainty.

**His struggle with Hindu Rajas**

Iltutmash had to fight against the Hindu Rajas who had been defeated and deprived of their States recently. During the reign of Aram Shah, they took advantage of the weaknesses and incompetence of the Sultan, overthrew his suzerainty, recaptured their States and established themselves as independent rulers. Iltutmash marched against them and defeated them one by one. The Raja of Rantambor was defeated in 1226 A.D., Gwalior submitted in 1232 A.D. and Malwa was conquered in 1234 A.D. He also captured Ujjain. Thus he succeeded in crushing the attempt of the Hindu Rajas to overthrow Muslim rule in India and re-establish their own authority.

**Threatened invasion by the Mongols**

While he was still busy suppressing the rival chiefs and the Hindu Rajas, he was faced with another formidable difficulty. This was the threatened invasion of the Mongols under Changez Khan, their great leader. Changez Khan was born in 1115 A.D. He was a great warrior and leader of men. He organised the tribes of Central Asia into a band of marauders and conquered large parts of Central Asia. His technique was to terrorise people, kill them in large numbers and burn villages and standing crops. On account of his massacre and brutal deeds, he was popularly called 'the scourge of God'. Wherever he went, he carried devastation and destruction. In 1221 A.D. he appeared on the borders of India in pursuit of Jalal-ud-Din Mangabarni, the ruler of Khwarizm or Khiva. Jalal-ud-Din had fled to the Indian border and appealed to Iltutmash to grant him shelter. Iltutmash knew that if he did so, Changez Khan would certainly follow him into India and its fate would be the same as that of many territories in Central Asia. He had to be tactful because he wanted to save the infant Muslim State of Hindustan from ruination. Therefore, he refused to grant asylum to Jalal-ud-Din, who fled to Sind, looted parts of north Gujarat and then took shelter in Persia. Changez Khan could not capture his prey. Moreover, the Mongols also found the heat of India rather oppressive and decided to withdraw. Thus by farsightedness, shrewdness and diplomacy, Iltutmash saved the infant Muslim State from the ravages of the Mongols, otherwise it might have collapsed under the strain of the

Mongol onslaught. However, the Mongols became enemies of the Sultans in later times.

### **Recognition by the Caliph : 1229 A.D.**

Iltutmash had succeeded in suppressing his rivals and had established his unquestioned authority in Hindustan. Even the Caliph, the head of the Muslim world, recognised his greatness and sent him robes of honour through a special envoy. The recognition by the caliph further strengthened his position on the throne and it became imperative for all true Muslims to obey and support him. He now called himself the lieutenant of the caliph.

### **The Corps of Forty Slaves**

Slavery was a common social institution in mediaeval times: invaders captured large number of prisoners who were later sold as slaves. Other persons were sometimes sold as slaves. There were several slave markets in different countries where all kinds of slaves could be purchased. Some of them were really able and rose to high positions. In India at this time there were a number of slaves. Iltutmash organised them into a corps, popularly known as the "Corps of forty slaves". They were faithful and competent slaves of the Sultan. They helped him in making conquests and administering the country. During his reign they were extremely helpful but after his death they caused endless trouble to his successors.

### **Completion of the Qutub Minar**

Construction of the Qutub Minar had begun in the reign of Qutub-ud-Din Aibak but it was not completed because of his sudden death. It was completed by Iltutmash, who named it as "The Qutub Minar" after Khwaja Qutub-ud-Din, a great Muslim saint and not after Qutub-ud-Din Aibak.

### **His character and achievements**

He was a great warrior and administrator and perhaps ranked as the greatest ruler of the Slave dynasty. He saved the newly established Muslim dominion in India from disruption by defeating his rivals and by suppressing the Hindu Rajas who had temporarily regained their lost territories. He also

saved it from the atrocities of the Mongols by his tact and diplomacy. He was not only a great conqueror and diplomat but also a great builder. The Qutub Minar at Delhi is a tribute to his patronage of architecture. He was a brilliant and gifted man and loved to live in the company of great scholars. In short, he was the saviour of the Sultanate who truly laid the foundations of permanent Muslim rule in India.

#### **Rukn-ud-din Firuz : 1236 A.D.**

Iltutmash knew that all his sons were worthless. Therefore, before his death he nominated his daughter Razia, as his successor. She was the ablest among his children and had been given an allround training. She could wield the sword effectively and was a capable administrator as well. Whenever Iltutmash went out of Delhi on his campaigns, the affairs of the State were entrusted to her charge. But after his death, the nobles did not carry out his wish, Razia being a woman. They were not prepared to have a woman at the head of government and therefore, placed Rukn-ud-Din Firuz, a son of Iltutmash, on the throne.

He was a worthless prince, fond of pleasure, spending most of his time in merry-making and leaving the administration in the hands of his mother, Shah Turkan. She was equally incompetent and in addition cruel. Therefore, there was widespread disaffection against her in the kingdom. Her atrocities worsened and the nobles rose against her. They deposed Rukn-ud-Din, imprisoned him and his mother and then placed Razia on the throne.

#### **Razia : 1236—1240 A.D.**

During her father's lifetime she had received all the training needed by a ruler. She knew riding and was fond of hunting, and in short had all the good qualities of a competent ruler. Whenever her father had gone out on expeditions she had officiated for him. She had also been nominated to succeed her father by him before his death but the nobles disregarded Iltutmash's advice. Now when they realised that she alone could keep the Sultanate under control, they placed her on the throne. But right from the beginning, she had to face a number of difficulties being a woman.



### Her difficulties

The biggest difficulty was her sex. Never before had a woman sat on the throne in any Muslim country. Therefore, a number of nobles were hostile to her and were not prepared to accept her as their ruler. Under the leadership of Muhammad Junaidi, the Wazir, they rose in revolt. By her tact, however she overpowered them and re-established her authority.

She had to face a more formidable opposition from the Ulemas or the Muslim divines who were supposed to be experts in Muslim religion. They were orthodox and narrow-minded and could not bear the idea of being governed by a woman. They were further offended by her because she discarded the veil, wore men's clothes and held open durbar. According to the Muslim regulations for women of the time, she should have remained in 'purdah'. Therefore, they issued a 'Fatwah' or a religious order that a woman should not be allowed to rule over men and they incited the people to rebel against her and depose her. It was with great difficulty that she suppressed the Ulemas.

There was more trouble in store for her. This was caused by the jealousy among the young nobles. She was a pretty lady of marriageable age. Every eligible young noble vied with the others to win her hand in marriage. Therefore, in the beginning they all supported her. But she began to favour Yaqut, an Abyssinian slave. One day he lifted her bodily and placed her in the saddle. This aroused the jealousy of the others, they could not tolerate it and therefore rose in revolt against her and Yaqut, under the leadership of Altunia, the governor of Sirhind. Razia and Yaqut boldly faced the revolt but in the struggle that followed, Yaqut was killed and Razia was taken prisoner and was placed in the charge of Altunia. Her brother Muiz-ud-Din Behram was placed on the throne.

She was a clever lady. By her charm she won over Altunia, her captor, and married him. Together they marched upon Delhi. The other nobles were ready to fight. She was deserted by a large number of her followers and was defeated near Kaithal and later murdered.

### Her character

She was a competent and talented lady and as a ruler she was

just. But her misfortune was that she was fair, young and unmarried and therefore roused rivalry and jealousy among the nobles and also among orthodox Muslims who were not prepared to accept a woman as a ruler. She was not only a good administrator but also a leader of men in times of war and marched in person against her enemies. She was also a patron of scholars. She was an extremely colourful person and if she had been allowed to rule in peace, the misfortune of the Sultanate which it had to face during the reign of her incompetent successors, might have been avoided.

### **Her successors**

For the next six years there was no stable government. There were plots and counter-plots and the nobles caused a good deal of disorder in the kingdom. Two princes succeeded to the throne, one after another during this period.

### **Muiz-ud-Din Behram : 1240-42 A.D.**

He ruled for a brief period of less than two years. He was quite a worthless prince and was deposed by the nobles.

### **Alau-ud-Din Masud : 1242-46 A.D.**

A grandson of Iltutmash was then placed on the throne. But he was pleasure-loving and utterly unsuitable to rule. So he also was deposed in 1246 A.D.

During the six years of disorder, uncertainty and instability, the Sultanate was further weakened by the invasion of the Mongols who had made their first appearance on the borders of India in the reign of Iltutmash but who had gone back then. Now they invaded India frequently as they found their raids here rewarding.

### **Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud : 1246-66 A.D.**

He was another son of Iltutmash. The nobles raised him to the throne in 1246 A.D. He ruled for 20 years. He was a pious, God-fearing prince who spent most of his time in saying his prayers or in copying the 'Quran'. Such a prince, however, was altogether a misfit for the throne in those turbulent times when the country was faced by frequent invasions and internal disorders. The need of the hour was a strong and powerful

ruler to defend the country against the Mongols and to suppress internal rebellions. However, this deficiency of character of the ruler was compensated by the ability, firmness and forthrightness of his Prime Minister, Balban, whose daughter was married to the Sultan.

Balban was a strong and efficient person. He ruled with strictness and maintained law and order. He fought against the Mongols, repelled them and subdued the turbulent nobles and Hindu Rajas. His success roused the jealousy of several nobles who poisoned the ears of the Sultan against him by telling him that Balban contemplated deposing him. So in 1253 A.D. he was dismissed from the high office. Immediately the affairs of the State became worse and he had to be recalled. He restored law and order and drove away the Mongols.

When the Sultan died in 1266 A.D. he had no difficulty in ascending the throne.

#### **Ghayas-ud-Din Balban : 1266-1286 A.D.**

Like Iltutmash, Balban also belonged to the Ilbari tribe of Turkestan. He had started his political career as a slave. When young he was taken prisoner by the Mongols and sold as a slave to Khwaja Jamal-ud-Din of Bussorah. His master was a pious man and treated him well. He was brought to Delhi where he was purchased by Iltutmash, who soon spotted that he was a capable person. In due course of time, he rose to high positions by sheer dint of merit till he became Prime Minister in the reign of Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud. For almost 20 years he wielded real power as Prime Minister and there was therefore no difficulty in his ascending the throne after the Sultan's death.

#### **His difficulties and how he solved them**

The throne was not a bed of roses and like earlier slave rulers, Balban also was surrounded by difficulties. The successors of Iltutmash were weak and inefficient and there was much disorder in the country. The nobles defied the Sultan, the State was bankrupt as taxes had not been collected properly. The Mongols found India a good hunting ground and had been raiding the country frequently. Even the capital, Delhi, was not safe from the raids of the Mewatis.

The difficulties were great but Balban was a man of iron will. He knew that all these problems could be solved if he could establish law and order and set up a sound system of administration. For this he required an efficient and powerful army. Therefore, he raised an army commanded by faithful and efficient persons. He also set up a solemn and dignified court where nobles were forced to observe very strict etiquette. They had to appear in court in full dress, no one dared laugh or joke at the court and no one could question his authority. His very presence in the court inspired awe among ministers and nobles. With an iron hand he crushed all opposition among the nobles.

### **Raids of Mongols**

Then he turned his attention to the menace of Mongol invasions. Their raids in the Punjab had caused a good deal of unrest and panic in the region. Moreover, the Mongols had been looting people, devastating villages and the country was gradually being impoverished. These invasions had to be halted or the Sultanate would crumble to pieces. In order to infuse a sense of security among the people and drive away the Mongols, he took the following steps :

He built a chain of forts along the north-west frontier to stop Mongol invasions, garrisoning them with the best soldiers he had. He appointed Muhammad who was a popular prince and his eldest and favourite son, as governor of Punjab, to give a sense of confidence to the people. He also appointed his second son, Bughra Khan, as Governor of Samana. These measures were successful. The two princes established law and order and infused a sense of security among the people. They bravely faced the Mongol invasions and beat them back but in 1285 A.D. Muhammad was killed in one of these encounters. His death was a terrible blow, even to the hard-hearted Balban, who could not bear the loss of his beloved son and died the next year.

### **The Mewati menace**

The Mewatis lived in the south-west of Delhi. They were a war-like people and raided Delhi often. They would loot people and then run away with the booty. Consequently, life and property in the capital were unsafe. Delhi at that time was surrounded by thick forest, which provided good shelter to the



raiders. The Mewatis were held in such great dread by the people of Delhi that the gates of the city were closed in the afternoon.

Balban decided to put an end to this menace. Lawlessness, looting and panic had to be curbed. Therefore, he took the following steps to rid Delhi of the nuisance of the Mewatis. He cut down the forest around Delhi so that they might not be able to take shelter there. He then built a number of police posts in the surrounding area to keep an eye on their activities. The Mewatis now found it difficult to raid Delhi and Balban succeeded in keeping them under control, thus giving the people of Delhi security.

#### **Rebellion of Tughril Beg : 1279 A.D.**

Balban was threatened by a new danger in the east. Tughril Beg, Governor of Bengal, was an ambitious and untrustworthy person. He rebelled against the Sultan and proclaimed his independence. Balban sent the imperial army twice to suppress him but on both occasions it was defeated. The rebellion had to be crushed otherwise the Sultanate would break up. So Balban decided to march in person against the rebel governor. He succeeded in defeating him. Tughril was captured and beheaded. Then Balban appointed Bughra Khan, his second son, as Governor of Bengal.

#### **His character and achievements**

Balban was a man of iron will. He suppressed all opposition inside and outside the country with a firm hand established law and order in the country. Temporarily he succeeded in containing the Mongols. He gave peace and security to the people. Through his spies he kept the nobles under control. He was a just ruler and punished high nobles if they were guilty of crime. He set up a magnificent court and enhanced the prestige and dignity of the Sultan because he believed that the king was the representative of God on earth. He was also a patron of men of letters. Amir Khusrau, a great Persian poet, sufi and philosopher lived during his reign.

Some historians think that he was the greatest Sultan of the Slave dynasty, even greater than Iltutmash, because for 40 years, 20 as Prime Minister and 20 as Sultan, he successfully guided the destinies of the Sultanate. He repulsed the Mongols,

subdued the nobles and established law and order in the country. The question of his recognition by the Caliph as Sultan did not arise as the Caliphate had already been overrun by the Mongols.

#### **Kaiqubad : 1286-90 A.D.**

After the death of Balban, Bughra Khan refused to accept the crown, being quite happy as Governor of Bengal. Therefore his son Kaiqubad was placed on the throne. He had been brought up under the strict guidance and care of his grandfather but as soon as he ascended the throne, he began to waste his time in merry-making and neglected the affairs of the State. Power gradually slipped into the hands of his favourite minister, Nizam-ud-Din who mismanaged the administration. Complete chaos and disorder prevailed over large parts of the dominions. Bughra Khan came from Bengal to admonish him and to ask him to mend his ways. This produced no effect on the young and haughty prince and conditions became worse and worse. The nobles, who were divided into different factions, were tired of him. The Khaljis, under the leadership of Jalal-ud-Din Firuz, rose against him and killed him in the Hall of Mirrors at Kilokhari. With his death the dominance of the Slave dynasty came to an end.

#### **Conclusion**

Muhammad Ghori and the Slave dynasty had only succeeded in founding the Muslim kingdom in Hindustan. It was not a homogeneous State and there was no solidarity or unity. Distant parts seldom obeyed the central authority. From its very beginning the Sultanate had to face three major difficulties: first, the opposition of rival chiefs who caused much disorder and who indulged in plots and counter-plots against the Sultan; secondly, the effort of the Hindu Rajas to reconquer their lost territories and thirdly, the invasions of the Mongols. Throughout the reign of the Slave dynasty the rulers had to grapple with these three problems. Only two Sultans, Iltutmash and Balban, temporarily succeeded in meeting these challenges and could maintain some kind of law and order. To do so they had to resort to excesses and atrocities. Though the Sultans kept themselves on the throne, they failed to establish an efficient and sound system of administration and failed to give a sense of security to the people.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE KHALJI DYNASTY : 1290-1320 A.D.

#### Expansion of the Sultanate

**A**CCORDING to Muslim law there was no fixed law of succession. Therefore, the death or murder of a ruler was often followed by civil war, sometimes leading to a change of dynasty. After the murder of the cruel and incompetent Kaiqubad, the nobles placed Jalal-ud-Din Firuz Khalji on the throne. He founded a new dynasty known as the Khalji dynasty.

#### Jalal-ud-Din Firuz Khalji : 1290-95 A.D.

He was unpopular and disrespected by the people of Delhi for they thought that he did not belong to Turkish stock but came from Afghanistan. There is a good deal of controversy whether he was a Turk or an Afghan, but most historians hold that he was of Turkish origin. Anyway the controversy over his descent caused much unrest among the people and made him unpopular.

He was an old man of 70 when he ascended the throne. Kind and gentle, thinking more of the next world, he was therefore unwilling to shed blood. A mild Sultan at this time was utterly unsuitable to rule because political conditions, aggravated by the ambitions of the nobles and the raids of the Mongols were very uncertain. They were likely to become worse with his leniency. The need of the hour was a strong and stern ruler who would be able to control the disaffected elements in the State and repulse the Mongols.

#### CHIEF EVENTS OF HIS REIGN

##### Rebellion of Malik Chhajju : 1291 A.D.

He was a nephew of Balban and held the Jagir of Kara (in U.P.). Ambitious and waiting to become an independent ruler, he rebelled against the Sultan and was joined by many others.

Jalal-ud-Din vigorously suppressed the rebellion but because of his leniency, instead of punishing the rebels, he pardoned them. This weakness on his part in dealing with the rebels undermined his prestige and the nobles ceased to respect his authority. Even his staunch supporters were annoyed with him at the lenient treatment of the rebels and he became all the more unpopular.

#### **Execution of Siddi Maula**

He was a "Darvesh" and was suspected of plotting against the Sultan. This time the Sultan was strict and Siddi Maula was caught and executed.

#### **Expedition against Ranthambore**

An expedition was sent against Ranthambore but it failed because the Sultan was afraid of shedding blood. This cowardice in warfare made him more unpopular.

#### **The Mongol invasions**

The Mongols who had found India an easy target for loot, invaded the country again in 1292 A.D. but were repulsed with heavy losses. Jalal-ul-Din, however, allowed a large number of them to settle near Delhi. They were later converted to Islam and were known as "The New Musalmans".

It was a very serious mistake on his part to have allowed them to settle in India as they caused much trouble and anxiety in the reign of his successors.

#### **Alau-ud-Din's expedition to Devagiri**

Ala-ud-Din, the Sultan's nephew and also his son-in-law, was the Governor of Kara. He was an ambitious and unscrupulous person wanting to set up an independent kingdom. To achieve his objective he needed money. Therefore, he raided Malwa in 1292 A.D. and collected much booty. During the expedition to Malwa he had heard of the immense wealth of the kingdom of Devagiri beyond the Vindhya. He believed that if he could sack Devagiri and collect a large amount of booty he would be in a better position to carry out his design of deposing the Sultan and capturing the Delhi throne. He would be able to purchase the nobles and the army with the



wealth of Devagiri. Ala-ud-Din, therefore, invaded the rich State of Devagiri in 1294 A.D. Rana Ramchandra Dev was taken by surprise, and was not at all prepared to give battle to the Muslim invaders. His son, Shankar Dev, had gone on an expedition to the south and the Raja had no option but to purchase peace at heavy price. Meanwhile Shankar Dev returned and against the advice of his father decided to fight Ala-ud-Din. He was badly defeated. Ram Chandra Dev had to sue for peace but Ala-ud-Din now imposed a heavier penalty. The Raja had to give much larger amounts of gold, silver, pearls and precious stones. Ala-ud-Din collected fabulous booty and returned to Kara. He had no intention whatsoever of sharing it with the Sultan.

The successful invasion of Devagiri opened the way to further conquests of the Deccan by the Muslims in the reign of Ala-ud-Din.

#### **The murder of the Sultan**

The Sultan, who loved Ala-ud-Din immensely and did not suspect him, came from Delhi to Kara to congratulate him on his brilliant success in the Deccan. The Sultan's ministers advised him not to go, warning him of the evil intentions of his nephew but the Sultan did not heed their warnings and overruled them. Outwardly Ala-ud-Din made all arrangements to welcome the Sultan but inwardly he had already planned to murder him. The two met in a boat on the Ganges, in the presence of Sultan's army, standing on the bank. The Sultan embraced Ala-ud-Din but at a given signal the Sultan's head was chopped off. His army standing on the bank stood helplessly and could not save him. Ala-ud-Din lavishly distributed the wealth he had brought from Devagiri among the nobles and soldiers of the Sultan and won them to his side.

As soon as news of the foul murder of the aged Sultan reached Delhi, his widow, Malika Jahan, placed Ibrahim, her son, on the throne. He was not a match for Ala-ud-Din, who easily defeated him and ruthlessly crushed all opposition. The way was now paved for his accession to the throne.

#### **Character of Jalal-ud-Din**

The Sultan was kind and just but a weak ruler. His lenient

treatment of the rebels undermined his authority and his affection for his unscrupulous nephew ultimately brought about his fall.

### **Ala-ud-Din Khalji : 1296-1316 A.D.**

Having murdered his uncle in a foul manner and having suppressed all opposition, Ala-ud-Din proclaimed himself the Sultan of Delhi.

#### **His ambitions**

Emboldened by his initial success he harboured two ambitions. First, he wanted to found a new religion like Muhammad, and secondly, he wanted to conquer the whole world so that he might be called the second Alexander.

When he consulted his nobles about his ambitious projects none except Qazi Ala-ul-Mulk, the kotwal of Delhi, had the courage, for fear of the Sultan's punishment, to oppose him. The Qazi advised him to give up his first ambition by telling him that people would not accept him as a prophet. He also persuaded him to first conquer the rest of India before embarking upon the conquest of the world. The advice was accepted.

#### **His difficulties**

The weak reign of the successors of Balban had caused much disorder in the Sultanate. The Hindu Rajas of Gujarat, Rajputana and Malwa had once again increased their power and re-established themselves. They posed a serious threat to the Sultanate. Moreover, the Mongols, who often raided India, considerably undermined the Sultan's authority and prestige and impoverished the country by carrying away much booty. The nobles, who were extremely dissatisfied and disloyal, often defied the Sultan's authority and increased their jagirs at the expense of the Sultanate.

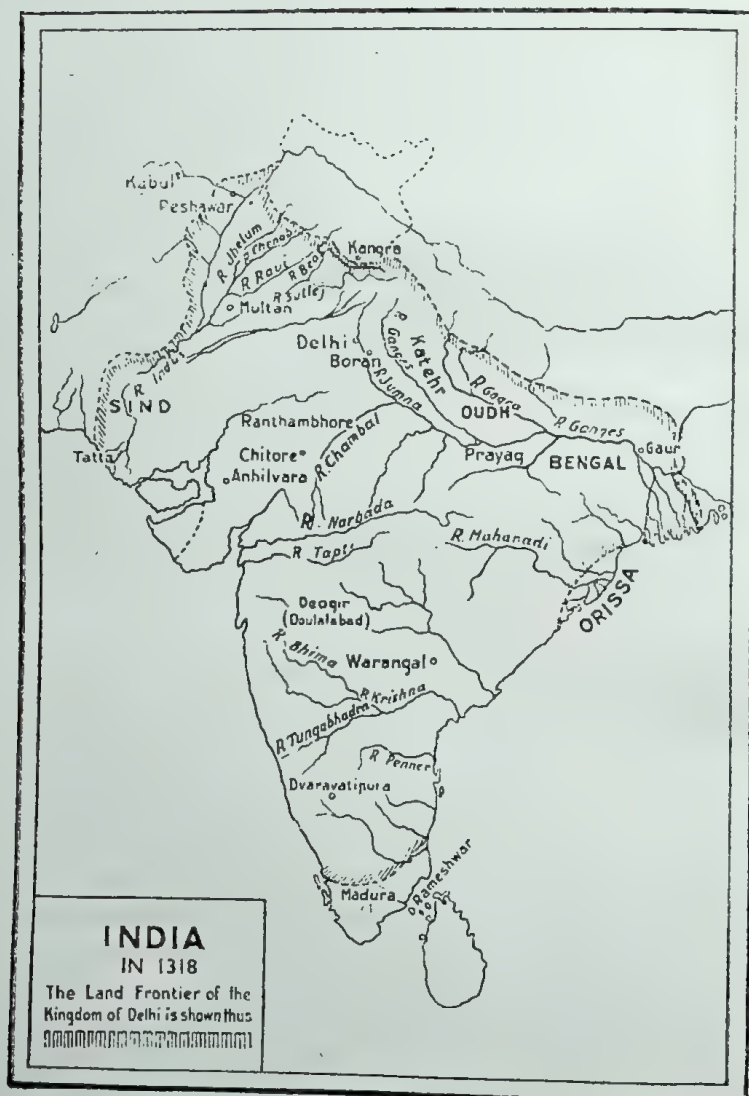
Ala-ud-Din had a strong will. Thorough but cruel in his methods, he was essentially a man of action and therefore solved these difficulties one by one boldly and firmly.

### **CHIEF EVENTS OF HIS REIGN**

#### **I: His conquests**

He was a great imperialist and wanted to expand the

Sultanate to the distant corners of India. His conquests were completed in two phases; first, he defeated the Hindu Rajas of



northern India and then turned his attention to the plateau of the Deccan which had several rich Hindu States and whose wealth he coveted much.

**(A) THE CONQUEST OF NORTHERN INDIA: 1297-1306 A.D**

During this period, he overthrew, one by one, the Hindu States in northern India.

**The conquest of Gujarat : 1297 A.D.**

It was ruled by Rana Karan Dev II, the Baghela Rajput. Ala-ud-Din sent an expedition under his brother, Ulugh Khan, and his minister, Nusrat Khan to conquer Gujarat. The Rana put up stiff opposition but was defeated. He became panicky and fled to Devagiri together with his beautiful daughter, Deval Devi, but his pretty queen, Kamla Devi, was captured. She was sent to Delhi where she was married to Ala-ud-Din and won him over by her charm becoming his favourite Begum. A large number of slaves were also captured. Among them was a Hindu, who later was converted to Islam and was better known as Malik Kafur. He turned out to be a capable general and commander of Ala-ud-Din's forces. In addition to this a large amount of booty was also collected and Gujarat was annexed to the Sultanate.

**Ranthambore : 1299-1301 A.D.**

It had been first conquered by Qutub-ud-Din, then lost, and reconquered by Iltutmash, but during the reign of Balban's weak successors, the Rajput Raja had again recovered the State. At this time Rana Hamir Dev ruled over the State. He was brave and famous for his deeds of valour. He had offended Ala-ud-Din by giving shelter to the leaders of the "New Musalmans" who had rebelled against the Sultan. Therefore, the Sultan sent an expedition under Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan against him. The Rajputs fought valiantly under the inspiring leadership of the Rana and defeated the Sultan's forces. Nusrat Khan was killed. Enraged, Ala-ud-Din marched upon Ranthambore in person. An unsuccessful attempt on his life was made by Aqat Khan, his nephew, assisted by some rebel leaders of the "New Musalmans". Aqat was captured and executed.

Ala-ud-Din laid siege to Ranthambore but when victory eluded him he resorted to trickery and bribery. He sent word to the Rana that he would go back after negotiating the terms of peace. The Rana's envoys, Rati Pal and Krishan Pal, were



won over by the Sultan by all sorts of promises. On their return to the fort, the struggle was resumed. The two 'trusted' lieutenants of the Rana proved treacherous. The sector of the fort in their charge was stormed and when there was no hope of repulsing the Muslim invaders, Rana Hamir and the brave Rajput men and women performed 'Jauhar'. Ranthambore was captured and Ulugh Khan was appointed governor.

#### **Chittor : 1303 A.D.**

The Rana of Chittor occupied a place of honour among the Rajput chiefs of Rajasthan. Ala-ud-Din wanted to conquer Chittor because of its prominence. Moreover, he had heard of the beauty of Padmini, the Rani of Rana Ratan Singh and had set his heart on capturing her.

Therefore, he marched upon Chittor and besieged the fort. The Rajputs fought well and hard and the Sultan's forces could not capture the fort. Ala-ud-Din sent word to the Rana that he would return to Delhi if he could be allowed to see the reflection of Padmini in a mirror. The Rana agreed to this request on condition that the Sultan would come alone. He was promised safe return. Ala-ud-Din trusted the Rajputs' word of honour and went alone to the fort. When he saw the Rani's face in a mirror his infatuation for her became all the greater and he was determined to win her at any cost. What he could not win by warfare he now decided to get by treachery. He invited the Rana to accompany him to his camp on the promise of a safe return. The unsuspecting Rana trusted him and accompanied him. As soon as he was in the Sultan's camp he was imprisoned. The Sultan sent word to the fort that the Rana would be set free only if Padmini consented to come to his camp. The Rajputs held a council of war and decided to pay back Ala-ud-Din in his own coin. They sent a message to the Sultan saying that Padmini would go but she would go in a manner befitting a queen. The Sultan accepted the Rajput condition.

Seven hundred palanquins left the fort with Badal, a young Rajput boy, disguised as 'Padmini'. In each palanquin sat a Rajput warrior and the palanquin bearers were also soldiers in disguise. The Rajputs had already been assured by the Sultan that the Palanquins would not be searched. When they reached

the Sultan's camp, the fake Padmini sought permission of the Sultan to say good bye to the Rana. This was granted. As soon as the Rana was set free and was among the Rajput soldiers they fell upon the Sultan's army which was taken completely by surprise. The Rana was rescued and he rode post haste to the fort.

Ala-ud-Din was determined to avenge his humiliation. He laid siege to the fort with redoubled vigour and spent a huge amount of money in constructing a mound as high as the fort to storm it. When there was no hope of repulsing the Muslim invasion, the Rajputs performed 'Jauhar'. Padmini and other women willingly jumped into the fire to save their honour. Ala-ud-Din entered the empty fort.

He appointed Khizr Khan, his eldest son, as governor of Chittor before returning to Delhi.

#### **Malwa : 1305 A.D.**

Ala-ud-Din next invaded Malwa and defeated and killed Rana Mahlak Deva. This conquest was followed by the annexation of Ujjain, Mandu, Dhar and Chanderi.

Thus by 1305 A.D. Ala-ud-Din had become master of the whole of northern India.

#### **(B) SOUTH INDIA : 1307-12 A.D.**

Having subjugated the whole of northern India, he now turned his attention to the south. His earlier expedition to Devagiri in 1294 A.D. had whetted his appetite and opened new horizons for conquests. He had realised how rich the Deccan States were and therefore in 1307 A.D. he decided to conquer the south, partly because he wanted to expand Muslim rule in the Deccan and partly because he desired to possess the wealth of the southern States.

The task of conquering the south was entrusted to his faithful lieutenant and commander, Malik Kafur.

#### **Condition of the Deccan in 1307 A.D.**

Conditions in the south were extremely favourable for an invasion. A greater part of the Deccan was divided into four principal States at this time, with a few minor chieftainships here and there. They were frequently at war among themselves

and were not likely to unite in the face of a common danger. The four principal States were Devagiri, Telengana, Mysore and Ma'bar. They were conquered one by one.

### **Conquest of Devagiri : 1307 A.D.**

Devagiri was ruled by the Yadav dynasty and its ruler at this time was Ram Chandra Deva. Ala-ud-Din had invaded Devagiri in 1294 A.D. and its Rana had promised to pay an annual tribute. The immediate cause of the invasion was two-fold: firstly the Rana had not paid the tribute regularly and secondly, he had given shelter to Rana Karan Dev of Gujarat.

The imperial forces marched through Malwa and easily defeated Ram Chandra Deva who sued for peace and accepted Ala-ud-Din's overlordship. He was sent to Delhi and treated kindly and after some time was allowed to go back.

During the campaign Malik Kafur captured Deval Devi, daughter of Rana Karan Dev and Kamla Devi of Gujarat, who had fled from there with her father and had taken shelter in Devagiri. She was sent to Delhi where she was married to Khizr Khan, the eldest son of the Sultan.

### **Telengana (Warangal) : 1309-10 A.D.**

The earlier expedition to Telengana in 1303 A.D. had failed but now Ala-ud-Din was emboldened by his victory against the Yadavs and therefore he ordered Kafur to continue his advance. Telengana at this time was under the Kakatiya dynasty and Pratap Rudra Deva I was its ruler. Kafur was assisted by Ram Chandra Deva in this campaign and he easily defeated the ruler of Telengana. Pratap Rudra Deva accepted the suzerainty of the Sultan and promised to pay an annual tribute regularly. A large quantity of booty, consisting of 100 elephants, 700 horses and a large amount of jewels, gold and silver were captured by Kafur.

Having subdued Devagiri and Warangal, Kafur returned to Delhi laden with vast booty.

### **Kafur's Second Expedition to the South : 1310-11 A.D.**

The Sultan sent Kafur a second time to the south to conquer Mysore and Ma'bar.

**Conquest of Mysore : 1310 A.D.**

It was ruled by the Hoysala dynasty, its ruler at the time being Vir Ballala III and the capital Dwarsamudra. Vir Ballala, taken completely by surprise, was easily defeated. He accepted the overlordship of the Sultan. Malik Kafur sacked the rich temples there.

**Ma'bar : 1311 A.D.**

Ma'bar was ruled by the Pandyas. At the time a civil war was going on between two princes named Sundara Pandya and Vir Pandya. The former invited Kafur to come to his rescue. This invitation provided a welcome opportunity to Kafur for invasion. He invaded Madura, the capital, which was deserted by Vir Pandya. He sacked the city and immense booty, consisting of 512 elephants, 5,000 horses and 5,000 mounds of jewels fell into his hands. Sundara Pandya also accepted the suzerainty of the Sultan. Kafur then advanced upto Rameshwaram and built a mosque there.

**Second Invasion of Devagiri : 1312 A.D.**

Rana Shankar Deva, son and successor of Ram Chandra Deva, had withheld the tribute and Kafur was deputed once again to punish him. Shankar Deva was killed and for some time Malik Kafur took charge of the kingdom. A little later Harpal Deva, son-in-law of Ram Chandra Deva, was allowed to ascend the throne.

The year 1312 A.D. marked the highest water mark of the extent of the Sultanate. Ala-ud-Din was now the overlord of practically the whole of the Deccan. His main object in invading the southern states was to loot their wealth. He knew that because of poor means of communications, he would not be able to rule over such a vast empire directly. Therefore, he was satisfied with the submission of the Deccan rulers, who accepted his suzerainty.

**The Mongol Invasion**

The Mongols who had posed a terrible nuisance to the Sultanate in the past, were also a menace to Ala-ud-Din. They had been raiding India frequently and causing much panic and damage to the Sultanate. Even in Ala-ud-Din's reign they



invaded India five or six times and on two occasions reached Delhi. In order to check effectively their advance and repel them, the Sultan revived Balban's policy, repaired the old forts and built a few new ones on the frontier. He also raised a big standing army. These measures proved effective and under the command of Zafar Khan, the Mongols were repulsed with heavy losses, but they came again and again. Ala-ud-Din accepted their challenge on the last occasion in 1307-1308 A.D. with redoubled vigour and inflicted so many casualties on them that for some time they dared not invade India.

#### **Massacre of the "New Musalmans" : 1297 A.D.**

As mentioned earlier, a large number of Mongols had been allowed to settle near Delhi in the reign of Jalal-ud-Din Khalji. They had accepted Islam. They became a source of constant trouble to the rulers and in 1297 A.D. rebelled against the Sultan. Ala-ud-Din crushed them with an iron hand and on a single day several thousands of them were massacred.

#### **Suppression of the Nobles**

Rebellions by nobles had led to much disorder in the Sultanate in the past. Even in Ala-ud-Din's reign they caused trouble. Aqat Khan, his nephew, Amir Umar and Mangu Khan, his sister's sons, and Haji Maula had rebelled against his authority. He wanted to crush all future rebellions effectively. He therefore analysed the causes of rebellions and came to the conclusion that the following factors were responsible :

(1) Leniency of the Sultan, (2) too much wealth with the nobles, (3) drinking of wine and (4) marriage alliances among the nobles.

The Sultan's leniency was the foremost cause. Whenever the Sultans were weak, the nobles indulged in plots and counter-plots and tried to undermine their authority. Secondly, when the nobles amassed much wealth, they were in a better position to get more support by raising their own personal contingents. Moreover, marriage alliances among the noble families gave them further accession of strength, if one noble rebelled he was likely to be joined by his relations. Lastly, under the influence of wine, the disaffected and disloyal nobles indulged in loose talk and excited others also to rebel against the Sultan.

To crush the nobles, Ala-ud-Din took the following steps :

Firstly, he set up a network of spies (Mohtasibs) who kept secret watch on the activities of the nobles. Any one found talking ill of the Sultan or trying to spread disaffection against him was reported to the ruler and was ruthlessly punished. Secondly, he held an enquiry into the title deeds of the Jagirdars. Many of them had extended their jagirs in the reign of weak Sultans in the past. Since they could not prove their titles, their jagirs were confiscated. Thirdly, he also issued orders that in future marriage alliances among nobles should be held only with his permission and he forbade social gatherings among them. Fourthly, he introduced prohibition. Drinking of wine was banned and he himself gave up drinking. Any one found drinking or drunk was severely dealt with.

These measures proved effective and the Sultan was able to keep the nobles under control. The "Mohtasibs" were efficient officials and kept a strict watch on the activities of the nobles. Sometimes the latter would not even talk loudly among themselves lest they be overheard by a 'Mohtasib' and reported adversely to the Sultan. Social gatherings became rare and consequently, life became dull and drab. But certainly the Sultan succeeded in suppressing the nobles.

### **Treatment of the Hindus**

In order to crush the Hindus, the Sultan imposed 50 per cent tax on them, which was much more than what was demanded from his Muslim subjects. They were not allowed to ride horses or wear fine clothes or enjoy the luxuries of life.

### **Price Control**

The Sultan carried out a novel and interesting experiment in controlling prices. He had raised a large standing army which meant a good deal of expenditure to the State. In order to maintain it, either he had, to raise new taxes or control prices. He decided to do the latter and therefore, enforced the following measures.

Prices of the articles were fixed. Anyone found selling them at higher price was ruthlessly punished. All shopkeepers were registered and licensed. A very strict watch was kept on their activities. He appointed Market Officers (Shahna-i-Mandi) who

enforced price control and severely punished all wrong-doers. The network of spies reported against the defaulting shopkeepers to the authorities and thus ensured strict observance of tariff rules and regulations. Weights and measures were periodically checked to avoid fraud. Hoarding was strictly prohibited. Any one found with more material than he was supposed to have was severely dealt with. Lastly, in order to make sure that there was no shortage of foodgrains and other articles in the market, land revenue from the Khalsa land was collected in kind and grain was stored in graneries. It was supplied to the shopkeepers if and when they needed it.

These measures proved effective and prices were kept under control because his officials and spies were efficient and the punishments meted out to black marketeers were exemplary.

#### **His last days : 1312-16 A.D.**

After 1312 A.D. there were positive signs of decay in the life of the Sultan. He allowed power to slip out of his hands. Malik Kafur, his favourite general and conqueror of the Deccan, became all powerful. Ala-ud-Din was a mere puppet in his hands. Kafur caused misunderstanding between the Sultan and his family. When the Sultan died he placed a minor son on the throne and became his guardian. Khizr Khan and Shadi Khan, two elder sons of Ala-ud-Din, were blinded. He virtually created a reign of terror. His atrocities aroused the nobles and he was killed. Thereupon Qutub-ud-Din Mubarak, another son of Ala-ud-Din, was put on the throne.

#### **His character and achievements**

##### **As a Man**

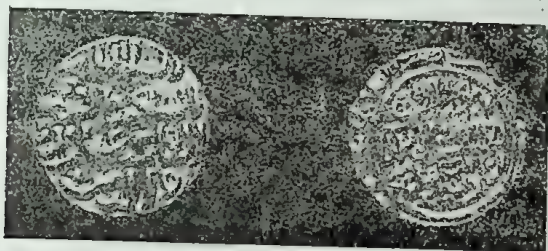
Ala-ud-Din was illiterate but wise. He was ambitious, self-willed and unscrupulous. In order to realise his ambitions, he would resort to the foulest methods. He killed his fond uncle to get the throne. He resorted to trickery to win Padmini but failed. He was suspicious and did not trust anybody.

##### **As a Soldier**

He was a great warrior and conqueror. He expanded Muslim rule into the Deccan. He raised a large standing army and successfully repulsed the Mongol invasions.

**As an Administrator**

Ala-ud-Din had his own theory of kingship. So far the Sultans had been considerably dominated by the Muslim divines or Ulemas and the 'Shariat'—the law of the Quran. The Sultans had found themselves helpless in the face of the Ulemas' opposition. Ala-ud-Din did not believe in any checks on his power, and regarded that religion must not be allowed to influence politics. Therefore, he completely ignored the Ulemas and did not brook interference by them in the affairs of State. He was a capable administrator, set up an efficient system of government and maintained law and order. He controlled prices so that he might not have to pay higher salaries to his soldiers. He effectively suppressed the nobles.



*The Coins of Ala-ud-Din Khalji (1296-1316 A.D.)*

**As a Patron of Art**

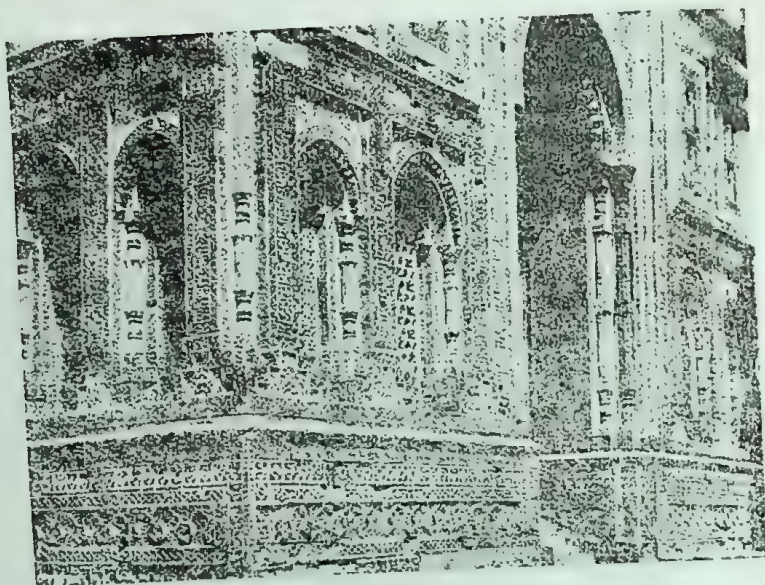
Though himself uneducated, he patronised scholars and artists. Amir Khusrau, a great Persian and Hindi poet, and philosopher lived in his reign. He was also a great builder and built several mosques.

**Qutub-ud-Din Mubarak : 1316-1320 A.D.**

Ala-ud-Din's other sons, Khizr Khan and Shadi Khan, had been blinded by Malik Kafur. Mubarak fortunately escaped this fate. The nobles who had succeeded in killing the ambitious Malik Kafur, now raised Mubarak to the throne.

On becoming Sultan, Mubarak began to indulge in merry-making and left the affairs of State to his favourite minister Khusrau. The only notable achievement of his reign was the suppression of the rebellion of Harpal Dev, the ruler of Devagiri,





*Alai Darwaza at Qutab Minar, Delhi*

who was defeated and flayed alive. Devagiri was annexed outright to the Sultanate.

Khusrau was unscrupulous, all the time plotting to capture the throne. He began to intrigue against the Sultan, killed him and usurped the throne. The nobles could not tolerate him on the throne, rose against him under the leadership of Ghazi Malik and killed him. This signified the end of Khalji rule in India.

### Conclusion

The Sultanate under the slaves was confined only to northern India. Khalji rule saw its rapid expansion to the Deccan and under Ala-ud-Din practically the whole of the south was conquered and subdued. Its rulers accepted his suzerainty. He did not annex the Deccan outright because with poor means of communications, he could not effectively rule over such a vast empire. This further expansion also brought much booty in its wake and the Sultanate became very rich.

The Khaljis also effectively took up the challenge of the Mongols and repulsed them with heavy losses and for quite

some time rid the Sultanate of the Mongol menace. Strict measures taken against the nobles also ensured peace for some time. They could not indulge in intrigues against the Sultan for fear of punishment. By far the most interesting experiment was price control. Never before and never after Ala-ud-Din Khalji was such an experiment carried out. The tariff reforms ensured stability of prices and were a great boon to the people.

In short, under the Khaljis, the foundation of the Sultanate became very firm.



## CHAPTER XX

### THE TUGHLAQ DYNASTY : 1320-1430 A.D.

#### Ghayas-ud-din Tughlaq : 1320-1430 A.D.

**G**HАЗI Malik, leader of the rebellion against Khusrau, the usurper, was elected Sultan by the nobles. He took the title of Ghayas-ud-Din Tughlaq. He had been the Governor of Punjab and Dipalpur under Ala-ud-Din and one of his famous generals and had fought against the Mongols many times. He was quite old when he ascended the throne. Simple, God fearing he, was a wise ruler. He was also a great builder and constructed the fort of Tughlaqabad in Delhi.

#### His difficulties and how he solved them

During the last few years of Ala-ud-Din's reign, when he had shown signs of old age, the affairs of the Sultanate were in disorder and a number of problems had arisen. Agriculture had been neglected and large parts of the country were faced with famine. The new Sultan, in order to revive agriculture, reduced the land revenue to 1/10th or 1/11th of the produce. This measure gave much relief to the peasants. He also dug canals to provide irrigation facilities to the peasants when rains failed.

The country was once again threatened by a Mongol invasion. They had caused much havoc in the Punjab in the past. In 1324 A.D., the Sultan personally marched against them and defeated them.

Governors of distant provinces had often defied central authority. The Sultan dismissed untrustworthy governors and appointed loyal ones instead.

#### Expedition to Warangal

Pratap Rudra Dev of Warangal had not paid the tribute for some time. An expedition was sent against him in 1321 A.D.

under prince Jauna, the eldest son of the Sultan to punish the Kakatiya ruler. But because of dissensions in the army the expedition failed and Jauna returned to Delhi.

However, a few months later, Jauna was asked to lead a second campaign. This time the Rana was defeated and captured and sent to Delhi. Warangal was renamed Sultanpur. On his way back prince Jauna also defeated the ruler of Orissa and returned to Delhi with much booty from his southern campaign.

#### **Expedition to Bengal : 1324 A.D.**

The governors of Bengal had always been troublesome to the Central Government. Their allegiance was rather loose. About this time a civil war had been going on in Bengal among the descendants of Balban. Three princes were contesting the throne. In order to settle this dispute and to restore order Ghayas-ud-Din personally marched upon Lakhnauti, the capital of Bengal. The princes submitted and order was restored. Nasir-ud-Din, one of them, was placed on the throne.

#### **His Death : 1325 A.D.**

It is said that Prince Jauna, the eldest son of the Sultan, was getting impatient to ascend the throne and therefore, he planned to kill the Sultan. In his nefarious designs he had the blessings of Khwaja Nizam-ud-Din Auliya, a famous saint of Delhi who lies buried in a Durgah in the Nizamuddin colony of Delhi. The saint was not on good terms with the Sultan but he was a great friend of Prince Jauna. He had predicted that the Sultan would not return to Delhi alive after the Bengal campaign. When the Sultan was only six miles from Delhi, the saint again said, "Hunoz Delhi Door Ast" (Delhi is still far off). In order to welcome the Sultan on his victorious return from Bengal, Prince Jauna organised a grand entertainment at a small village called Afghanpura about five or six miles from Delhi. A huge wooden pavilion was constructed to receive the Sultan. Among various items of entertainment was an elephant fight. It is said that at a given signal the elephants dashed against the pillars of the pavilion which gave way and crashed on the head of the aged Sultan, killing him instantaneously, along with his younger son. The prediction of the saint thus came true and the Sultan never reached Delhi alive.



Some historians say that this murder was not deliberately planned by Prince Jauna and was a pure accident, but in view of the saint's prophecy most people hold it was a pre-planned murder.

### **Comparison between Jalal-ud-Din Firuz Khalji and Ghayas-ud-Din Tughlaq**

It will be interesting to make a comparison between the founders of Khalji and the Tughlaq dynasties at this stage. Both were old when they ascended the throne. They were mild, just and pious. Both led rebellions against the reigning Sultan's atrocities and both were raised to the throne after a successful coup. During the reign of these two monarchs, an expedition was sent to the Deccan. In the case of Jalal-ud-Din, Devagiri was the target, and in the case of Ghayas-ud-din Tughlaq, it was Warangal. Both died violent deaths, as a result of a conspiracy at the hands of their successors. Jalal-ud-Din was killed by his nephew Ala-ud-Din, Ghayas-ud-Din Tughlaq was killed by his own son, Prince Jauna.

### **Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq : 1325-51 A.D.**

After the death of Ghayas-ud-Din Tughlaq his son, Prince Jauna, ascended the throne with the title of Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq.

### **Personal accomplishments**

He was one of the most brilliant princes who ever adorned the throne of the Delhi Sultanate. He was a master of Persian and Arabic literature, logic, philosophy, physical sciences, mathematics, astronomy and medicine. He had a remarkable memory and keen intelligence, was humble, generous, and lavish in bestowing gifts. He was very religious in private life but would not allow the Ulemas to interfere in political life. Yet in spite of these personal accomplishments, he was a miserable failure as a Sultan. He has been described by historians as a genius or a lunatic, an idealistic visionary, benevolent or cruel.

His greatest fault was that he lacked commonsense and practical judgement. He was hot tempered, hasty and impatient. He conceived fantastic schemes and when his plans went wrong,

he lost his balance of mind and acted as a tyrant, punishing defaulting people to death.

A study of the chief events of his reign would enable us better to make an assessment of his character, whether he was a genius or a lunatic or perhaps a mixture of opposities.

### CHIEF EVENTS OF HIS REIGN

#### 1. Enhanced Taxation in the Doab : 1326-27 A.D.

The Doab, the land between the rivers Ganges and Jamuna, was the most fertile part of his dominions. He wanted to increase his revenues in order to build a large army with whose help he might be able to conquer more territories. Hence the land revenue in this region was raised. Unfortunately at this time it was in the grip of a severe famine and the peasants found it difficult to pay the increased taxes. The zealous revenue collectors collected the taxes with great vigour in order to please the Sultan. They caused untold miseries to the peasants who had to leave their homes to avoid harassment at their hands. Many of them were ruined. The Sultan's critics exaggerated these atrocities by saying that the farmers who could not pay and fled into the jungles were chased and hunted down by the officers of the Sultan.

When the Sultan learnt of the actual conditions in the Doab, he withdrew his order of enhanced taxation and granted relief to the sufferers. Wells were sunk in the region and loans were advanced to the peasants to rehabilitate themselves. But the relief came too late and the Sultan had already become extremely unpopular.

#### Criticism of this measure

There was no doubt that the Doab was a very fertile region but before imposing enhanced taxes the Sultan should have made sure about the real conditions there. He was misled by his officials, who did not inform him about the famine, and he was let down again by them when they zealously collected the enhanced taxes to please him. It was certainly an exaggeration to say that the peasants were actually hunted down. The Sultan's fault was that he did not know the actual conditions there and did not use his judgement in dealing with the situation effectively.

## 2. Transfer of Capital : 1327 A.D.

Nothing made the Sultan more unpopular than the transfer of his capital from Delhi to Devagiri, which was renamed Daulatabad. It caused untold sufferings to the people. The transfer plan was certainly sound, because Daulatabad was more centrally situated than Delhi, taking all parts of the Sultanate into consideration. From there the Sultan would be in a better position to keep the Hindu Rajas, who had recently been conquered, under control. Moreover, Delhi had constantly been menaced by Mongol invasions and therefore, peace there was often disturbed. Daulatabad would be far off and would be free from the nuisance of Mongol invasions.

The Sultan made suitable arrangements for the transfer. Roads were constructed, trees were planted and provision for the supply of food and water made. The transfer was to be completed in two stages. First, the nobles were moved in 1327 A.D. They were to be followed by the people of Delhi. The latter resisted the idea of migrating from their ancestral homes on sentimental grounds and refused to go. At this the Sultan lost his temper and in his anger ordered everyone to go. It is said that even the lame and blind were dragged to the new capital. According to Zia-ud-Din Barni, "not a cat or a dog was left among the buildings of the city (of Delhi), in its villages or in its suburbs". Perhaps this was an exaggeration, in order to discredit the Sultan, because Barni was hostile to him as his family had suffered in the Doab on account of the enhanced taxation.

Travelling a distance of about 700 miles was not a comfortable journey for such a large number of people. Arrangements broke down. There was shortage of food and water and the people suffered miserably. They were struck with disease and hunger and many died on the way. When they reached Daulatabad, it was discovered that it was too small a city to accommodate all the people of Delhi. Therefore the Sultan decided to return to Delhi. On the return journey the people again suffered terribly, a large number of them dying on the way. The Sultan was cursed by the people and he became very unpopular. Delhi never regained its old glory and prosperity and presented a deserted look.

**Criticism of the scheme**

There was nothing wrong with the idea of transferring the capital to Daulatabad because certainly it would have been easier to rule the Sultanate from there. But the way in which it was carried out was faulty. The Sultan should have moved only his court and the secretariat. The order of en masse shifting could not be justified. Traders, businessmen and others would have followed to Daulatabad because if they remained in Delhi they would have lost their business and the patronage of the court. The Sultan was definitely responsible for causing untold miseries and sufferings to thousands of homeless people of Delhi by forcing each one of them to go.

**3. The issue of token currency : 1329-30 A.D.**

The Sultan issued new gold and silver coins at the beginning of his reign but the transfer of the capital to Daulatabad and his generosity caused a heavy drain on the treasury. He wanted some money to carry out his scheme of world conquest and as there was a world wide shortage of silver, he conceived a new scheme of issuing token currency. He borrowed the idea from China and Persia where paper currency was already in vogue. Therefore, in 1329 A.D. he issued copper tokens which were to pass for gold and silver coins. These were to be accepted as legal tender and people could pay taxes in copper tokens. As minting coins was not a government monopoly those days, practically every home became a mint and people converted their copper utensils into copper tokens. Consequently markets were flooded with counterfeit coins, shopkeepers refused to accept them and trade was at a standstill. When the old Sultan learnt of the true state of affairs, he withdrew the token coins in 1334 A.D., after almost five years. All copper coins were exchanged for gold or silver coins. A large mound of copper tokens was collected near Delhi. This exchange further depleted the government treasury, impoverished the Sultanate and ruined many businessmen.

**Criticism of the scheme**

The idea of issuing token currency was far in advance of the times; people could not appreciate it. Moreover, before embarking upon this scheme the Sultan should have ensured that



token coins would not be struck in private homes. Gold and silver coins could not be made in private homes as both these metals were very costly but there was plenty of copper in every home, hence it was easy to strike copper tokens. As the Sultan could not control private minting he should not have introduced the scheme, which was ill-conceived and ill-executed. It not only ruined the government but also business and industry.

#### **4. Scheme of Conquest : 1337-38 A.D.**

A large number of foreigners, particularly Persians, had found employment at the court. The Sultan had given them high posts. Persia at this time was ill-governed and neighbouring rulers cast their greedy eyes on the conquest of outlying provinces. Muhammad Tughlaq also coveted the conquest of Khurasan in alliance with Tarmashirin, the ruler of Trans-Oxiana, who was a very insincere and undependable ally. Therefore, the Sultan raised a big army of 3,70,000 men and paid them their salary for a year in advance so that they might make provisions for their families in their absence. It caused a huge drain on the treasury. When all the arrangements had been made and the expedition was to begin Tarmashirin backed out of the alliance. The Sultan found it difficult to launch the invasion alone. So he also gave up the idea of invading Khurasan. All the same a huge sum of money had been spent on a futile project.

#### **The Karajal expedition**

Since he had already raised a big army he wanted to use it against a rebel hill chief of the Garhwal-Kumaon region. An expedition was sent against the rebel but with snow, rain and lack of provisions there were very heavy casualties and the soldiers suffered much. Though the expedition failed, the hill chief agreed to pay tribute.

The Sultan's critics have magnified this as an attempt to conquer Tibet and China but actually the Sultan did not harbour any such scheme. He only wanted to punish the hill chief.

#### **Criticism of the Khurasan Project**

This was again an ill-conceived scheme. The Sultan should

not have trusted a wily and unscrupulous ally like Tarmashirin. He should not have allowed himself to be misled by the Persian nobles to conquer Khurasan nor have paid the soldiers their salary in advance thus depleting his treasury.

Lastly, his campaign against the hill chief was undertaken at a wrong time when soldiers had to face rain and storm. With a little imagination and commonsense, the Sultan could have avoided heavy casualties in the army and a big drain on his treasury.

The Sultan's ill-conceived schemes of enhanced taxation in the Doab, transfer of the capital, issue of token currency and the military misadventures, completely undermined his prestige. The total failure of the projects caused widespread misery and people lost faith in him. His military lapses emboldened the discontented nobles to declare their independence. Several of them, some successfully, rebelled against him.

#### **Rebellion of Baha-ud-Din Gurshasp : 1326-27 A.D.**

He was a cousin of the Sultan and the Jagirdar of Sagar. He declared his independence but was easily defeated, captured and flayed alive.

#### **Aiba's rebellion**

Bahram Aiba, surname Kishlu Khan, who was the Jagirdar of Sind also rebelled in 1328 A.D. He too was defeated, captured and beheaded. Though these rebellions were suppressed, distant governors openly defied his authority and in course of time outlying regions of the Sultanate declared their independence.

#### **Vijayanagar : 1336 A.D.**

The Sultan's hold on the Deccan was nominal. Since he was now thoroughly discredited, the Hindu States grasped the opportunity and declared their independence in 1336 A.D., forming the State of Vijayanagar under the leadership of two brothers, Hari Har and Bukka.

#### **Bengal : 1338 A.D.**

Bengal had always been a thorn in the side of the Sultan. On many occasions in the past its governors had defied the

central authority. At this time they took advantage of the Sultan's unpopularity and Fakhr-ud-Din Mubarak Shah proclaimed his independence in 1338 A.D.

#### **The Bahmani Kingdom : 1347 A.D.**

A large number of foreigners had been employed in Devagiri which had been renamed Daulatabad. They were not loyal to the Sultan. Taking advantage of the unpopularity of the Sultan, they organised themselves under the leadership of Abul-Muzaffar Ala-ud-Din Bahman Shah and rebelled against the Sultan. Bahman Shah succeeded in establishing an independent Bahmani kingdom in 1341 A.D. When Muhammad Bin Tughlaq died in 1351 A.D., the Sultanate had already started declining and he was a thoroughly disillusioned man.

### **OTHER EVENTS OF HIS REIGN**

#### **The Mongol Invasion : About 1327 A.D.**

The Mongols again invaded India, and over-running the Punjab, rapidly marched towards Delhi. The Sultan had to pay a heavy bribe to purchase peace from the Mongols. This fear of the Mongols was one of the reasons for his desire to transfer the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad in the Deccan.

#### **Recognition by the Caliph : 1343-44 A.D.**

The Sultan was thoroughly discredited in the eyes of the people. Following the successive failures of his fantastic schemes he had lost his prestige and respect. In the midst of these difficulties, however, the Caliph came to his rescue by according him recognition. A special envoy arrived from Baghdad with the robes of honour for him. He thought that with the blessings and support of the Caliph he would be able to strengthen his authority but even the Caliph's blessings could not save the Sultan from the rebellions, as the people had lost faith in him. The rebellions, as mentioned above, led to the disintegration of the Sultanate.

#### **Policy towards the Hindus**

Muhammad was not a bigoted Musalman. He completely ignored the Ulemas. Like Ala-ud-Din Khalji, he believed that

politics and religion must not be intermingled. Therefore, he did not allow the Ulemas to interfere in his administration. He followed a liberal religious policy towards the Hindus. He even tried to carry out social reforms by suppressing 'Sati'.

### **Patronage of foreigners**

He had a special weakness for foreigners, many of whom had come to India, particularly from Persia where the empire was on the decline. They were appointed to high posts and received generous gifts from him. Some of them settled in Devagiri and during the last years of his reign caused much trouble for the Sultan and were responsible for carrying out an independent Bahmani kingdom in the Deccan. It was under the influence of these Persian nobles that he conceived a plan to conquer Khurasan. The nobles, on whom he bestowed so much generosity, ultimately proved untrustworthy.

### **Visit of Ibn-i-Batuta**

He was a native of Tangier, Africa, and a great scholar. He visited India from 1333-1342 A.D. His scholarship and wide knowledge was greatly appreciated by the Sultan who showered special favours on him and appointed him the Chief Qazi of Delhi. He wrote an account of the Sultanate which is one of the important sources of information on the reign of the Sultan.

### **An Estimate of Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq's character**

He was a great scholar, well versed in literature, mathematics and physical sciences. Because of his scholarship, he has been called a genius by his admirers. But he lacked wisdom, commonsense and a sense of proportion. He lost his temper and balance of mind when his schemes went wrong and indulged in acts of cruelty. Consequently his critics have called him 'a mad man'. Perhaps he was a combination of both; some historians have called him "a mixture of opposites" because he had both good and evil characteristics.

As an administrator, he was a miserable failure because he conceived fantastic schemes and carried them out without proper planning and without ensuring proper support and assistance from zealous officials.

As a warrior too, he failed completely. His campaign to



conquer Khurasan and the expedition to Karajal in the Garhwal-Kumaon region were misconceived.

However, he was a patron of culture and encouraged many foreign scholars to come to India. He also extended his patronage to Indian writers.

In spite of his qualities of head and heart, he was an utter failure as a Sultan and was primarily responsible for the disintegration of the Sultanate.

#### **Firuz Tughlaq : 1351—1388 A.D.**

Muhammad Tughlaq had no son. He died unexpectedly while leading an expedition to Sind. After his death the army was leaderless and was being harassed by the rebels in Sind. Under these circumstances the nobles offered the crown to his cousin Firuz, who in the beginning was reluctant to accept it. Firuz was the son of Rajab, younger brother of Ghayas-ud-Din Tughlaq. His mother was the daughter of Rana Ran Mal of Abohar near Ferozepur.

When Firuz ascended the throne the condition of the Sultanate was far from satisfactory. Muhammad's ill-fated schemes and rebellions had undermined the prestige of the Sultan. The two major problems thus faced the new Sultan—restoration of authority, and reconquering of lost provinces.

The tasks were formidable, particularly as Firuz was a weak ruler and therefore ill-fitted for the job. However, he tried his best to bring about law and order and restore prosperity.

### **CHIEF EVENTS OF HIS REIGN**

#### **A. Military Expeditions**

##### **Expedition to Bengal**

Bengal had become independent during the reign of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq under Haji Ilyas and Firuz therefore wanted to conquer it. Two expeditions one after the other, were sent to Bengal, but both failed. Then Firuz himself led an army of 70,000 soldiers in 1353-54 A.D. against Haji Ilyas. Victory was within sight when he retreated, because his heart melted with pity when he heard the shrieks and wailing of Muslim women.

On the death of Haji Ilyas in 1359 A.D., the Sultan under-

took a second invasion of Bengal. On the way he stayed for six months at Zafarabad, on the banks of the Gomti, and founded the city of Jaunpur near Zafarabad in memory of his cousin prince Jauna (Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq). The second expedition to Bengal also was a failure. Sikander Shah, son and successor of Haji Ilyas, fought well and hard. The Bengali troops bravely defended the fort Ikdala which was besieged by Firuz. As the rainy season had approached, the Sultan had to raise the siege. He concluded peace with Sikandar and Bengal remained independent.

#### **Conquest of Orissa : (Jai Nagar 1359 A.D.)**

However, on the way back from Bengal Firuz led a successful expedition against Orissa. The Raja fled at first but later made his submission and agreed to pay tribute.

#### **Nagarkot**

It had become independent in 1337 A.D. during the reign of Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq. It had a very rich temple. In 1361 A.D. Firuz attacked and conquered it. A large number of Sanskrit books were seized and later translated into Persian.

#### **Expedition to Sind : 1361-63 A.D.**

Firuz resumed the task of conquering Sind, which had been abandoned earlier following the sudden death of Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq. He led the expedition personally with 90,000 soldiers, cavalry and elephants, but Jam Babaniya, the ruler of Sind, inflicted heavy casualties on the Imperial Army. Famine and disease made conditions of the invading army worse. Firuz gave orders to retreat but lost his way in the Rann of Kutch and for about six months even his whereabouts were not known. His faithful Minister, Khan Jahan Maqbul, however, kept his throne intact and sent help. In 1363 A.D. Jam Babaniya was forced to sue for peace and agreed to pay tribute. Firuz's expedition to Sind showed his lack of military skill.

Therefore, Firuz made no attempts to lead expeditions and the Deccan thus remained independent. Fortunately, during his reign there was no Mongol invasion.

### B. Benevolent Measures

Though he failed on the military front, he carried out several benevolent measures to rehabilitate agriculture and trade and consequently brought about a good deal of prosperity and happiness.

During the reign of Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq both agriculture and industry had suffered much. Therefore, to give relief to the people Firuz abolished a large number of taxes, as sanctioned by the "Shariat" (Quranic Law).

"Zakat", or charity tax was imposed on Muslims only; "Jazia", or poll tax was levied on the Hindus and even Brahmanas who had so far been exempted from it had to pay it; "Khams" (share of the State from the spoils of war) amounted to one-fifth of the booty for the State and four-fifths for distribution among the soldiers. In addition to these taxes, a special irrigation tax amounting to one-tenth of the produce was also imposed.

All octroi duties which hindered trade were abolished. This was a great boon to traders and ensured free movement of goods in the country. The tax collectors were specially instructed not to harass the peasants and to be just, otherwise strict measures were taken to punish them.

In order to give further relief to the peasants, he constructed four canals from the rivers Jamuna and Sutlej and a large area was irrigated by the new network of canals. Engineers were appointed to carry out the projects and supervise the working of the canals. One canal ran from the Sutlej to Ghaghar, another from Sirmur hills to Hansi and Hissar, a third from the Ghaghar to Hirani Khera and the fourth from Jamuna to Firuzabad.

Large areas of waste land were brought under cultivation to increase production of foodstuffs and other cash crops. The income from them was utilised for spreading education and for religious purposes.

These measures were responsible for reviving trade and agriculture. Both the farmers and the merchants were contented and became prosperous. They acquired and accumulated much wealth and their women could afford to wear gold and silver ornaments. Prices were kept under control. Thus there was all-round contentment during his reign.

### Relief measures for the public

He took further steps to give relief to the common man and instituted an Employment Bureau. Those without jobs could get themselves registered with the bureau and when there were suitable vacancies they were provided with jobs.

He also set up a Charity Bureau to give relief to poor Muslim families. Adequate sums of money were given to poor parents to marry their daughters. This concession was offered only to Muslims and not to Hindus.

He also looked after the health of the people and opened a number of hospitals where free medicines and food were given to the patients. These hospitals were manned by expert physicians.

He also reorganised the judicial system. So far suspected criminals were subjected to inhuman torture, such as amputation, tearing out of eyes, pouring molten lead down their throats, crushing their bones and driving nails into their hands and feet. These were very cruel methods of punishment. Firuz was kind hearted and abolished torture.

Firuz had an aesthetic sense. He wanted to beautify his cities and laid about 1200 gardens and parks. He was also a great builder and built a number of cities such as Jaunpur, in memory of his cousin prince Jauna, Fatehabad, Hissar and Firuzabad. He constructed several mosques, palaces, sarais, bridges and dams. He also brought two Asokan pillars to Delhi, one from Meerut and the other from a village near Khizrabad in the upper Jamuna region.

### OTHER EVENTS OF HIS REIGN

#### 1. Recognition by the Caliph

Firuz was extremely religious and a zealous Muslim. He ruled according to Quranic Law and had great regard for the Caliph, who sent a special envoy with robes of honour for the Sultan. Recognition by the Caliph strengthened his position on the throne. He styled himself deputy of the Caliph and engraved the Caliph's name on his coins.

#### 2. Revival of Jagir System

Ala-ud-Din had taken stringent measures against the nobles and confiscated their jagirs. Firuz revived the Jagir system



because he wanted to satisfy the nobles and win their support. This was very short-sighted policy because the gains for the Sultan were only temporary. In the long run the nobles undermined the prestige of the Sultan and thus weakened the Sultanate.

### 3. The Army

The army was also reorganised on a feudal basis and regular soldiers were given liberal grants. Even disabled soldiers were allowed to continue in the army on compassionate grounds. Recruitment became hereditary and even those not competent to fight joined the armed forces. Consequently the efficiency of the army was greatly undermined.

### 4. Slaves

Slavery was a common social custom in mediaeval times. The number of slaves increased greatly, so much so, a separate department had to be set up to look after them. Jagirdars sometimes presented slaves in lieu of tax payable by them. This rise in the number of slaves was responsible for a considerable drain on the government treasury.

### His last days

Because of old age and failing sight, Firuz's last days were most unhappy. His eldest son Muhammad Khan was thoroughly incompetent and given to pleasure. The nobles took advantage of his weaknesses and defied his authority. Since the army also was inefficient he could not enforce obedience. The process of disintegration of the Sultanate continued.

### An estimate of Firuz

He was a kind, just and benevolent ruler. He carried out several measures for the revival of trade and industry and restored prosperity. His benevolent measures also ensured peace but the revival of the Jagir system was a costly mistake as the nobles tended to become powerful and ultimately defied the Sultan when he became weak. He was an utter failure as a military leader because he was afraid of shedding Muslim blood. His expedition to Bengal failed and therefore he wisely did not embark upon the conquest of the Deccan.

**End of Tughlaq dynasty**

Firuz was the last great ruler of the Tughlaq dynasty. He was succeeded by five Sultans under whom the Sultanate further disintegrated gradually. The period from 1388 to 1413 A.D. was full of intrigues, plots and counter-plots and civil wars. In the midst of this confusion and disorder, India was invaded by Timur. This invasion hastened the end of the Tughlaq dynasty and caused further dismemberment of the Sultanate.

**Firuz's successors****Tughlaq Shah II (1388-89 A.D.)**

He was the grandson of Firuz and ascended the throne in 1388 A.D. but was deposed and killed in 1389 A.D.

**Abu Bakr (1389-90 A.D.)**

He was another grandson of Firuz and was placed on the throne in 1389 A.D. but was deposed a few months later.

**Nasir-ud-Din Muhammad Shah: 1390-94 A.D.**

He was the youngest son of Firuz and ascended the throne in 1390 A.D. but died after a short reign of four years.

**Ala-ud-Din Sikandar (Humayun Khan)**

He was the son of Nasir-ud-Din and succeeded his father after his death but he also died after reigning for a few months only.

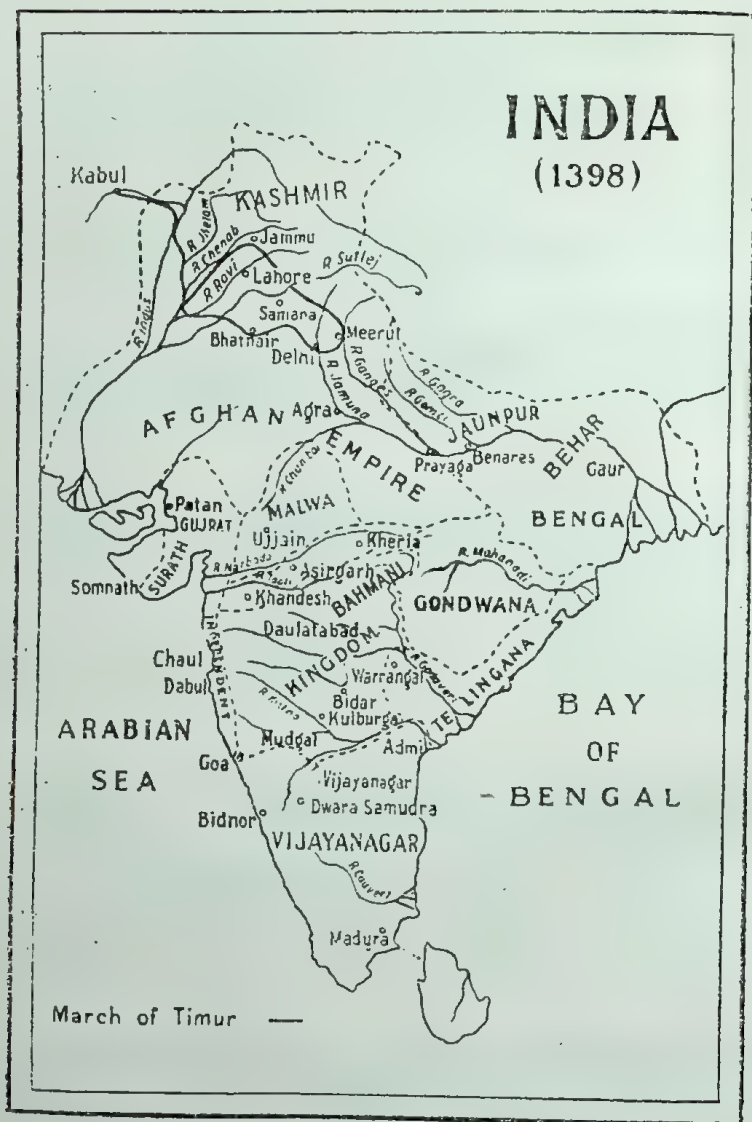
After his death, there was a disputed succession and at one time, there were two Sultans in Delhi, Mahmud Shah and Nusrat Shah, each claiming the throne. In the struggle that was inevitable the latter was defeated and killed.

**Mahmud Shah (1394-1413 A.D.)**

He was the last Sultan of the Tughlaq dynasty. The only important event of his reign was the invasion by Timur.

**Timur's invasion (1398-99 A.D.)****His early life**

Timur was the son of Amir Turghay, the chief of Samarqand, in Central Asia. Born in 1336 A.D., he succeeded his father in 1369 A.D.



He belonged to the 'Tartar' tribe and was a born leader of men. He was lame in one leg and was nicknamed 'The Lang'. His ambition was to extend his power and loot the neighbouring countries. He was a notorious conqueror, for wherever he and his hordes went they carried destruction and devastation

with them. He conquered Afghanistan and parts of Persia and Mesopotamia. During his campaigns he destroyed thousands of villages, burnt standing crops and massacred numerous people. He was brutal like Changez Khan, the great Mongol leader.

#### **India on the eve of his invasion**

The political condition of India was very favourable for a foreign invasion because in northern India there was not a single ruler who could repel a foreign invader. Sultan Mahmud Tughlaq was weak, his authority being defied by his own nobles. Large parts of the Sultanate had already become independent under his predecessors. Taking advantage of the chaotic conditions of Hindustan, Timur decided to invade India in 1398 A.D.

#### **The Indian campaign**

He entered India through the Khyber Pass in 1398 A.D. and sent an advance party under Pir Muhammad, his grandson. The latter captured Multan after a brief siege. Then the Tartars under Timur advanced towards Delhi. On his way Timur sacked the city of Talamba and massacred a large number of people. He next attacked Bhatner, a great Rajput stronghold where the Rajputs offered stiff resistance. But they were overpowered and were forced to perform 'Jauhar'. In his typical ruthless manner, Timur killed a large number of people.

On reaching Delhi, he massacred about 1,00,000 prisoners to strike terror into the people. Sultan Mahmud offered feeble resistance, was easily defeated and then he fled to Gujarat leaving the people of Delhi to the mercy of the invader. For several days there was so much killing and looting in the capital that an Urdu poet has described the event in the following lines :

"Tatarion ko le kar Timur Lang Aye,  
Dilli ke rehne wale janon se tang Aye".

(Timur invaded Delhi with his ruthless Tartar hordes,  
The massacre made men cry for mercy to their gods.)

Timur collected a large quantity of booty from Delhi in his



brief stay and then marched on Meerut, Hardwar, Nagarkot and Jammu in turn. He sacked all these places and killed many people. During his Indian campaign, apart from the booty, Timur captured innumerable slaves and artisans and returned to Samarqand after appointing Khizr Khan as Governor in Hindustan.

### **Results of the invasion**

The devastating Tartar invasion had far-reaching effects in northern India. Large parts of the Punjab were laid waste and there was a severe famine. Delhi was completely ruined and according to one historian, "not a bird moved a wing" there for some time. Timur carried away so much gold and silver that gold and silver coins became rare in northern India. Prices fell because people had very little money to purchase articles. One 'Bahloli', a small coin, could cover the expenses of a man and his horse from Delhi to Agra, a distance of over 100 miles.

Timur was deeply impressed by Indian architecture and massive buildings. Therefore, he took with him a large number of masons and artisans who helped him in building beautiful mosques and palaces in Samarqand. He also captured a large number of prisoners who were treated as slaves. When he could not feed them all, many were sold at a cheap price.

The Sultanate, which had already disintegrated, completely broke down under the stress of this invasion. Timur appointed Khizr Khan as his viceroy in the Punjab before he returned. Bihar, Jaunpur, Orissa, Gujarat, Malwa and Sind declared their independence. In short, Timur's invasion was the death knell of the Sultanate. Mahmud returned to Delhi from Gujarat after Timur had gone away and ruled upto 1413 A.D. but his authority was confined only to a limited area around Delhi. With his death ended the reign of the Tughlaq dynasty.

### **Conclusion**

The Tughlaq dynasty produced two remarkable Sultans, namely, Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq and Firuz Tughlaq. The former was a great scholar but a controversial figure and has been described as a genius or a mad man or a mixture of opposites. His ill-conceived schemes miscarried and caused

considerable ruination in the country. Their failure undermined the prestige and authority of the Sultan.

Firuz Tughlaq, his successor, tried to rehabilitate agriculture and industry and to restore the authority of the Sultan but achieved only partial success. He could not reconquer the provinces of Bengal and the Deccan, which had become independent in the reign of his predecessor, and therefore he could not reverse the process of dismemberment of the Sultanate.

Under his feeble successors, the process was accelerated and one by one the distant provinces became independent. Timur's invasion gave the final blow to the integrity of the Sultanate, which was reduced to only a small region round about Delhi.

The Tughlaq period also witnessed a good deal of building activity. The most famous building of this period is the fort of Tughlaqabad. Firuz Tughlaq built several mosques, dams, bridges, inns and founded a number of cities. He also laid a number of parks and gardens.

## CHAPTER XXI

### SAYYAD AND LODI DYNASTIES 1414-1526 A.D.

#### A : Sayyad Dynasty : 1414—1451 A.D.

##### **Its Founder**

##### **Khizr Khan (1414-1421 A.D.)**

WITH the death of Sultan Mahmud in 1413 A.D., the Tughlaq Dynasty came to an end and once again there was a contest for the throne. Daulat Khan Lodi, a powerful noble, was raised to the throne but his claim was contested by Khizr Khan who had been left in India as Viceroy by Timur. Khizr Khan marched from Multan, deposed and imprisoned Daulat Khan Lodi and ascended the throne. The dynasty founded by him was known as the Sayyad Dynasty because he claimed descent from prophet Muhammad.

Khizr Khan did not assume the royal title and continued to rule as a Viceroy of Timur's fourth son and successor Shah Rukh. This was probably done by him to gain the support of the Tartar chief, if there were any attempts by Indian nobles to depose him.

There was nothing remarkable about his reign, most of his time being spent in keeping himself in power. The Sultanate had shrunk considerably and it was now confined to the territories round about Delhi. His authority was often challenged by the Hindu Rajas of Etawah and Kanauj.

However, he was a just, generous and benevolent ruler but was not strong and efficient. He died in 1421 A.D.

##### **Mubarak Shah (Muiz-ud-Din) : 1421-1434 A.D.**

He succeeded his father but his reign was more or less uneventful. There were rebellions in Bhatinda and the Deccan which he subdued. However, he was constantly troubled by

the Khokhars and the nobles. The latter were dissatisfied and conspired against him under the leadership of Sarvar-ul-Mulk, his Wazir. He was killed in 1434 A.D.

The most notable event of his reign was the writing of the *Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi* by Yahya-Bin-Ahmad Sirhindi. This book is a valuable source of information about the last years of the Sultanate.

#### **Muhammad Shah : 1434-1444 A.D.**

Muhammad Shah, the grandson of Khizr Khan and a nephew of the late Sultan, succeeded to the throne in 1434 A.D. The unscrupulous nobles continued to give him trouble and the administration degenerated. Bahlol Lodi, the Governor of Lahore, rebelled and tried to capture the throne but was suppressed. His rebellion further weakened the administration.

#### **Ala-ud-Din Alam Shah : 1444-1451 A.D.**

After Muhammad Shah's death, his son Ala-ud-Din Alam Shah ascended the throne. He was the last ruler of the Sayyad Dynasty. Because of the intrigues and untrustworthiness of the nobles, and the hostility of the Hindu Rajas, the Sultanate continued to become weaker and weaker. The authority of the Sultan was confined to Delhi and the neighbouring villages only. Ala-ud-Din Alam Shah was not strong enough to assert his authority and to conquer more territories. He was feeble and pleasure-loving, and therefore utterly incapable of suppressing disorders and rebellions. Finding the political situation against him, he abdicated in favour of Bahlol Lodi and retired to Badaun in 1451 A.D. where he died two years later. His abdication marked the end of the Sayyad Dynasty. Sayyad rule formed an insignificant and inglorious chapter in the history of the Sultanate.

### **B : Lodi Dynasty : 1451—1526 A.D.**

#### **Its Founder**

#### **Bahlol Lodi 1451-1489 A.D.**

The first three dynasties of the Sultanate, namely, the Slave, the Khalji and the Tughlaq, were all of Turkish origin. The Lodis were Afghans.



Bahlol Lodi, founder of the dynasty, was the Governor of Lahore and Sirhind when Ala-ud-Din Alam Shah abdicated in his favour. At the time of his accession conditions of the Sultanate were extremely deplorable. The country was seething with rebellions of the nobles, defying the Sultan's authority. Bahlol, however, was a strong man. He was determined to restore order and establish his authority. He forced the chieftains of Mewat, Sambhal, Koil, Mainpuri, Rewari, Etawah and parts of the Doab to accept his suzerainty.

#### **Conquest of Jaunpur : 1478 A.D.**

Having subdued these chiefs, his position on the throne was more secure. He next launched further campaigns to extend his dominions. He waged several wars against the Sultan of Jaunpur and finally defeated Hussain Shah, the last king of the dynasty, in 1478 A.D., driving him into Bihar. Jaunpur was annexed to the Sultanate. In 1486 A.D. he appointed Barbak Shah, his eldest son, as Governor of Jaunpur.

Sultan Bahlol, a man of vigour, was a great warrior and an efficient administrator. He was also kind to the poor. Though he was not a scholar he patronised learning. He died in 1489 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Sikandar Lodi.

#### **Sikandar Lodi (Nizam Khan): 1489-1517 A.D.**

After Bahlol's death, succession to the throne was disputed and there was a civil war between his sons, Barbak Shah, Governor of Jaunpur and Sikandar. Sikandar emerged victorious, suppressing all opposition.

He was a strong and capable ruler. He dealt with the rebel nobles with a firm hand, suppressing them. Out of confusion and disorder he re-established law and order. He also set up an efficient system of espionage, thereby keeping a strict watch on the nobles. They dared not rebel against him. Under the weak rulers of the Sayyad Dynasty economic conditions had considerably degenerated and prices had risen. Therefore, in order to improve the economic conditions of the people he controlled prices, like Ala-ud-Din Khalji.

He further strengthened the Sultanate by conquering Bihar and making a treaty with the ruler of Bengal, thus making secure his eastern frontiers. He also suppressed the Hindu

Rajas of Gwalior, Dholpur and Chanderi who had tried to reassert their authority under his weak predecessors.

He founded the city of Sikandara near Agra in 1504 A.D. and transferred his capital there because he thought it would be more central and he would be better able to control his kingdom from there.

Throughout his reign, he was busy fighting the rebel nobles and extending the boundaries of the Sultanate.

#### **His character and achievements**

He was the most capable ruler of his dynasty. He was strong, just and energetic and set up an efficient system of government. He succeeded not only in establishing law and order but also fostered prosperity. However, in religious matters he was a fanatic.

#### **Ibrahim Lodi : 1415-1526 A.D.**

After Sikandar's death, there was again a contest for the throne between his sons, Ibrahim and Jalal. Some disaffected nobles supported Jalal, the younger son of Sikandar, and placed him on the throne of Jaunpur, but Ibrahim, the elder son, marched against him and defeated him. Jalal fled to Gwalior and Malwa where he was captured by the Gonds and murdered.

Ibrahim was a good soldier, but proud, haughty and tactless. By his arrogant and rude behaviour, he antagonised the nobles, several of whom began to plot against him.

Daulat Khan, Governor of Lahore, invited Babar, king of Kabul, to come to India and help him in deposing Ibrahim.

Alam Khan, Ibrahim's uncle, personally went to Kabul to invite Babar who readily accepted the invitation. Both Daulat Khan and Alam Khan were under the impression that like Timur, Babar would also invade India mainly to loot it and that after defeating and deposing Ibrahim he would go back to Kabul. Babar had different designs. He had long been cherishing the ambition of conquering it and becoming its master. These invitations together with chaotic political conditions in India, because of the disorder and disaffection amongst the nobles, provided him an opportunity for which he was waiting. In 1524 A.D. he marched into India and occupied

Lahore. Daulat Khan Lodi and Alam Khan soon realised that Babar had no intention of giving up his Indian conquests, so they turned against him. Deserted by his accomplices he returned to Kabul to get reinforcements.

## THE CONQUEST OF HINDUSTAN

### The first Battle of Panipat : 1516 A.D.

In the winter of 1525 A.D., he again invaded India and occupied the Punjab. Daulat Khan Lodi made his submission. Then Babar proceeded further to measure his sword against Sultan Ibrahim and reached Panipat where an important battle in the history of Hindustan took place on 21st April, 1526 A.D. Babar was the first to reach Panipat. His army consisted of 12,000 soldiers and some cannons. Gun powder had been invented in Europe some time earlier and its use in warfare had altogether changed conventional methods of fighting. Cannons formed a powerful weapon of attack and their skilful use by the owners often ensured victory. The Turks had learnt the use of cannons from the West and Babar in turn learnt it from them.

On his arrival at Panipat, he encamped on the plains near the city and arranged his army in a battle order as follows. He had the town of Panipat on his right. In front of his army he dug a deep trench and covered it with leaves and branches. A similar trench was dug on his left. He placed the cannons just behind the trench in the front and divided his army into six divisions, namely, right flank, right centre, centre, left centre and left flank and kept some soldiers in reserve.

Ibrahim reached Panipat with 100,000 soldiers and also arranged his army in a fighting order in the traditional Indian style with elephants in front. He divided his huge army into four units, right, centre, left and reserve.

The two armies were poised for a bitter struggle. Babar was a born general, having seen much warfare before coming to India. He made effective use of his artillery and cavalry. The battle began with the booming of cannons. Never before had such zooming been heard in warfare in northern India. Their thunder and power of destruction caused panic and confusion among the elephants and the rank and file of the Lodi

army. Wounded and maddened the elephants ran back and trampled many of their own men. There was utter confusion in the Lodi army. At this moment, Babar's swift cavalry moved in and a flanking movement clinched the issue. The Lodi army was completely overwhelmed and routed. Ibrahim was killed.

The victorious Mughal army under Humayun marched forward to capture Delhi and Agra. Babar was proclaimed Emperor of Hindustan.

### **Importance of the First Battle of Panipat**

The first Battle of Panipat was an event of far-reaching importance and a landmark in the history of India. It marked the end of an era of disorder, plots and disintegration. It also ushered in a new era, more enlightened and glamorous. The Mughals gradually established a strong and powerful empire which endured for several centuries and under which India made great political, social, economic and cultural progress. The conquest of India by the Mughals heralded the modern period of Indian history.

### **Conclusion**

Under the Sayyads the disintegration of the Sultanate continued. Khizr Khan merely ruled as a Viceroy of his Tartar masters, the descendants of Timur. Throughout the Sayyad rule the country seethed with rebellions, plots and counterplots and the authority of the Sultan was confined to only the neighbourhood of Delhi.

The Lodis tried to revive the earlier glory of the Sultanate. Bahlol conquered Jaunpur, Sikandar further extended it by the conquest of Bihar. That was, however, the end of all efforts for expansion and consolidation. Ibrahim, the last Lodi ruler, so antagonised his nobles that they turned hostile and became traitors to the Sultanate. They invited Babar, the ruler of Kabul, to invade India to rid them of the unpopular rule of Ibrahim Lodi. The first Battle of Panipat brought about the downfall of the Sultanate.

### **Causes of the downfall of the Sultanate**

The Sultanate of Delhi, the foundation of which was laid by



the Slaves, which saw its expansion and climax under the Khaljis, started declining in the reign of the Tughlaqs and disintegrated completely under the rule of the Sayyads and the Lodis. It ultimately fell a prey to the Mughal invaders in 1526 A.D.

Although the Sultans of Delhi laid the foundation of Muslim rule in India, they did not succeed in establishing a lasting empire. The Sultanate had neither the cultural continuity of ancient India, which preceded it, nor the political stability of the Mughal Empire, which succeeded it. It was a period of chaos in Indian history and its inherent defects led to its ultimate fall.

#### A. Political causes

1. The decline of the Sultanate is most apparent from the reign of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq. The failure of his schemes was responsible for discrediting the Sultan and impoverishing the Sultanate. The enhancement of taxation in the Doab and transfer of the capital to Daulatabad alienated both the people and the nobility. His military adventures and the issuing of token currency depleted the resources of the State, made it weak and gave the disaffected nobles an opportunity to rebel. Thus in the reign of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq a number of rebellions took place, some being successful. Bengal and the Deccan were lost to the Delhi Sultans for ever. His successors were unable to stop this disintegration. In spite of all his virtues Firuz Tughlaq was a weak military leader. He made half-hearted efforts to re-establish his authority over Bengal but did not succeed. His successors were worse.

Although the policies and character of the later Sultans undoubtedly played a part in the decline of the Sultanate, there were deeper political causes also.

2. According to Islamic polity, on which the Sultanate was based, there was no fixed law of succession. Thus after the death of a Sultan every prominent prince or noble considered himself a claimant to the throne. The crown could belong to anyone who succeeded in capturing it. Therefore, there were frequent civil wars which depleted the resources of the State both in men and material and diverted the attention of the ruling class from the affairs of the government.

No single dynasty in the Sultanate had acquired a sanctity similar to that of the Mughal Dynasty in a later period. Thus there were frequent dynastic changes during this period.

3. Another inherent defect in the Sultanate was the position of the nobility. There were a large number of nobles belonging to different races. These commanded a lot of power and to keep them under control was one of the major problems of the Sultan. They were disloyal and often rebelled in an attempt to carve out a kingdom for themselves. Various Sultans tried different methods to keep them under control. Iltutmash had constituted a corps of 40 slaves, who were powerful nobles, and had tried to keep them busy in the task of consolidating and expanding the Sultanate. But his weak successors could not keep them under control. Razia had tried to balance one group of nobles against another but was ultimately deposed by them. Balban and Alauddin Khalji kept a strict check upon the nobility with the help of spies and regulated their habits and matrimonial alliances among them. But they succeeded only temporarily. Ala-ud-Din even abolished the jagir system to weaken them. However, the nobility remained a constant ulcer in the life of the Sultan, indulging in scheming and subversion, plots and counterplots, keeping the political life of the Sultanate in perpetual strife.

4. Another unsettling feature of the political life of the Sultanate was foreign invasions. Frequent Mongol invasions demoralised the Sultanate and made a deep impression upon the political life of the people. Iltutmash was the first Sultan who had to face the possibility of a Mongol invasion and he encountered it with diplomacy. From then on the Mongol invasions became a regular feature and were chiefly responsible for giving the Sultanate a sense of insecurity. Huge expenses had to be incurred by the Sultans to meet the challenge. Balban constructed a chain of fortresses on the north-western frontier to strengthen his defences. Ala-ud-Din Khalji instituted a large standing army to beat back the numerous invasions during his reign. It is said that Muhammad Bin Tughlaq purchased security and peace from the Mongols. The Mongol threat thus politically weakened and economically impoverished the Sultanate. The Punjab was ravaged time and again by the Mongol hordes and during the reign of Ala-ud-Din Khalji the

Mongols once even reached Delhi. The Sultans thus had to be constantly alert. It was indeed providential that the most serious Mongol invasions came at times when strong rulers—Ilutmash, Balban and Ala-ud-Din Khalji—were on the throne of Delhi, or the Sultanate might have succumbed earlier.

It was the invasion of Timur in 1398 A.D. which dealt the death blow to the Sultanate. Timur reached Delhi and sacked it. The reigning Sultan could do nothing to halt him. Not only did Timur's invasion ruin the Sultanate financially, it also put an end to the prestige of the Sultan, whose inability to defend his people from foreign invasions deprived him of the right to rule. From then on it was only a matter of time before the Sultanate collapsed and it was left for Babar to complete the formalities through yet another invasion from the north-west.

#### **B : Economic causes**

It has already been mentioned how the Mongol invasions and the schemes of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq caused a huge drain on the finances of the Sultanate. What is more, trade, industry and agriculture also languished under the Sultanate. India was completely cut off from the world in the north-west because of the Mongols in this period and thus the land route to the west was blocked. Within the country, unstable political conditions and insecurity of trade routes also contributed to the poor conditions of trade. Nor did the Delhi Sultans do anything to encourage agriculture and industry. Indeed Ala-ud-Din Khalji's high demands of taxation and the enhancement of taxation in the Doab by Muhammad Bin Tughlaq caused severe hardship to the peasants and famines occurred. But the one notable exception was Firuz Tughlaq who gave loans to the peasants to buy seeds, constructed a number of canals to irrigate land and laid a number of gardens and orchards. After him, however, his good work was not continued. Thus economically also, the Sultanate had been considerably weakened.

#### **C. Social causes**

The Sultans of Delhi and the ruling class were foreigners and thus they did not have the bond of nationality or race

with their subjects. What is more, they even belonged to a different religion. The religious differences proved to be an unbridgeable gulf. The Hindus had seen the Muslim invaders ravage their country. The invaders had shown disrespect to their religion by breaking idols and destroying temples. There was, therefore, no love lost between the Hindus and the Muslims. Further, the Muslim rulers used to impose the Jazya tax upon the Hindus. The majority of the subjects were thus treated as second rate citizens. The Sultans of Delhi could only gain their acquiescence through sheer force. There was a military occupation of the land and no effort was made by them to establish the Sultanate on a more stable basis and gain a legal right to rule through the support of the people. As long as the rulers were alien oppressors, it did not matter to the people who sat on the throne. They were indifferent to the frequent changes in rulership.

Thus political, economic and social causes combined to make the Sultanate a weak institution. Amidst these shortcomings the immediate cause of the downfall of the Sultanate was the attitude of the last Sultan, Ibrahim Lodi.

He sought to humiliate the nobles by his haughty attitude and succeeded in alienating them completely. They conspired against him and invited Babar, who was waiting for such an occasion. Thus the Sultanate was dealt the final blow by the Mughal invasion of 1526 A.D. Babar's victory at Panipat against Ibrahim Lodi marked the end of the Sultanate.



## CHAPTER XXII

# BREAKUP OF SULTANATE AND RISE OF PROVINCIAL KINGDOMS

THE disintegration of the Sultanate began in the reign of Muhammad Tughlaq and continued to its end in 1526 A.D. On the downfall of the Sultanate a number of independent States sprang up in north India and the Deccan. We shall briefly study the history of some of the important States in the two regions.

## NORTHERN INDIA

### 1. Bengal

It was conquered by Ikhtiyar Bin Bakhtiyar Khalji, a general of Muhammad Ghori, in 1198 A.D. Throughout the history of the Sultanate it was a turbulent province. Because of its long distance from Delhi, the hold of the Central Government was nominal. Its governors were often tempted to declare their independence and they gave endless trouble to the Sultans. Iltutmash brought the Khalji Malik under control with great difficulty. Balban had to suppress the revolt of Tughril Beg and appoint his second son, Bughra Khan, as Governor of Bengal.

Throughout the reign of the Khalji Sultans, Balban's sons and grandsons caused much trouble.

Ghayas-ud-Din Tughlaq had to lead another campaign to subdue the province. In order to have more effective control over it, he divided it into three administrative divisions with capitals at Lakhnauti, Satgaon, and Sonargaon. But even these divisions could not ensure peace there and soon the three provincial governors began to struggle among themselves for supremacy. They took advantage of the confusion and disorder that prevailed in the Sultanate following the failure of the

schemes and reforms of Muhammad Tughlaq. Consequently, Ala-ud-Din Ali Shah, Governor of Northern Bengal, declared his independence in 1339 A.D. and transferred his capital from Lakhnauti to Pandua. His foster brother, Haji Ilyas, united the three divisions by force and proclaimed himself the independent ruler of United Bengal in 1345 A.D. Sultan Firuz Tughlaq made two unsuccessful attempts to reconquer Bengal, first in the reign of Haji Ilyas and second in that of Sikandar Shah, his son and successor. Bengal was lost for good to the Sultanate.

### **Some Important Rulers of Bengal**

Bengal remained independent from 1345 to 1576 A.D. when it was conquered by Akbar, the Great Mughal. During this period three dynasties ruled in Bengal. (In the succeeding pages we shall read about the achievements of some of its rulers).

#### **A. Haji Ilyas Dynasty : 1345-1493 A.D.**

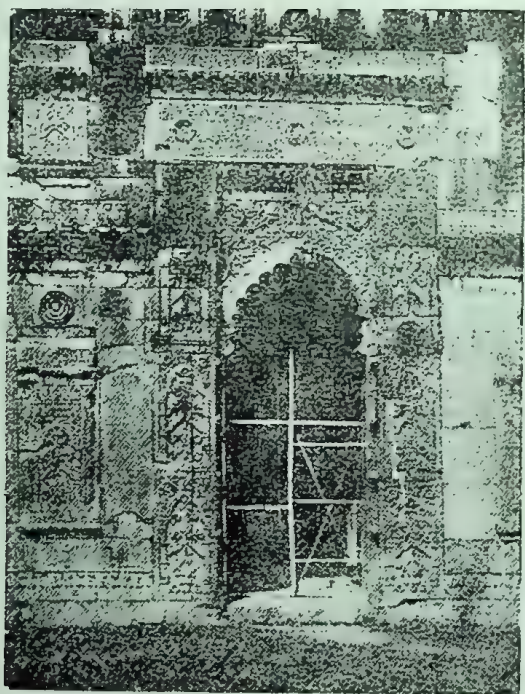
Haji Ilyas, the founder of United Bengal, ruled from 1345 to 1357 A.D. He consolidated his power and established peace and prosperity.

Sikandar Shah (1357-1393 A.D.), the son and successor of Haji Ilyas, was a powerful ruler. He was also a great builder and built the famous Adina mosque near Pandua. His successors were weak. Saif-ud-Din Hamza Shah, who ascended the throne in 1410 A.D., was a mere puppet in the hands of Raja Ganesh, a Hindu Jagirdar of Bhaturia. Ganesh's son, Jadu, usurped the throne in 1414 A.D. He embraced Islam and was known as Jalal-ud-Din Muhammad Shah. He died in 1431 A.D. His successor, Shams-ud-Din Ahmad (1431-1442 A.D.), was a tyrant and therefore the nobles rebelled against him, killed him and restored Nasir-ud-Din, the grandson of Haji Ilyas, to the throne in 1442 A.D. However, the dynasty founded by Haji Ilyas, came to an end in 1493 A.D. because of the disorder created by the Abyssinian slaves.

#### **B. The Sayyad Kings : 1493-1564 A.D.**

The Hussain Shahi Dynasty, better known as the Sayyad kings, ruled in Bengal from 1493 to 1564 A.D. Ala-ud-Din Hussain Shah (1493-1518 A.D.), the founder of the new dynasty,

was a powerful ruler. He suppressed the Abyssinian slaves. He also expanded his kingdom by waging wars against Orissa, Magadha and Assam. During his reign Wali Muhammad, a noble, built the famous "Chhota Sona Masjid" (Smaller Golden



*Chotta Sona Masjid, Gaur*

Mosque) at Gaur. Nasir-ud-Din Nusrat Shah (1518-1533 A.D.), his son and successor, was even a greater king. He further consolidated his kingdom and was a popular and enlightened ruler. He built two famous mosques, "The Bara Sona Masjid" (Larger Golden Mosque) and "Qadam Rasul" (Foot of the Prophet). He also patronised Bengali literature and the Mahabharata was translated into Bengali.

Ghayas-ud-Din Mahmud Shah, the last ruler of the Sayyad Dynasty, was expelled by Sher Shah, who became master of Bihar and Bengal in about 1538 A.D. Humayun, the Mughal Emperor, temporarily occupied Bengal in the same year but as



*Bara Sona Masjid, Gaur*

soon as he withdrew, Sher Shah once again regained mastery of Bengal.

### **C. The Kararani Kings : 1564-1576 A.D.**

Yet a third dynasty known as the Kararani Dynasty ruled from 1564 to 1576 A.D. Taj Khan Kararani founded the new dynasty. The Kararani rule in Bengal was short-lived. In 1576 A.D., Daud Khan, the last ruler, was defeated by Akbar and Bengal was annexed to the Mughal Empire.

### **Achievements of the Kings of Bengal**

Some kings were very enlightened and under their patronage Bengali literature flourished and a number of books were published. Many Sanskrit books, including the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, were translated into Bengali. They were also great builders and several monuments and mosques were constructed in Pandua and Gaur.

### **2. Jaunpur : The Sharqi dynasty**

The city of Jaunpur was founded by Firuz Tughlaq in memory of his cousin, Prince Jauna, better known as Muhammad Tughlaq. It seceded from the Sultanate soon after Timur's



invasion, and Khwaja Jahan Malik Sarwar founded the Sharqi dynasty in 1399 A.D. He was a great warrior and extended his authority over Oudh and parts of Bihar. He was succeeded by five other rulers, the last of whom was Husain Shah. Husain waged several wars against Sultan Bahlol Lodi and even threatened Delhi. However, in the end Bahlol had his revenge and defeated him decisively in 1479 A.D. and Jaunpur was annexed to the Sultanate. He appointed his son, Barbak Shah, as Governor of Jaunpur in 1486 A.D.



*Atala Devi Masjid, Jaunpur*

Jaunpur was one of the biggest seats of learning in Northern India and was famous for its schools and colleges. Its rulers also beautified the city by building a number of mosques, Atala Masjid being the most famous. It was built by Ibrahim Shah Sharqi. Under the enlightened rulers of Jaunpur, education, architecture, music and the fine arts made tremendous progress.

### **3. Malwa**

It was conquered by Ala-ud-Din Khalji in 1305 A.D. but it broke away from the Sultanate in 1401 A.D. soon after Timur's invasion and Dilawar Khan declared his independence and made Dhar his capital. His son and successor, Hoshang Shah,

(1406—1435 A.D.), shifted the capital to Mandu. He was a warlike prince and waged constant wars against Delhi, Jaunpur and Gujarat. He attacked Orissa disguised as a merchant and completely surprised the Raja who was easily defeated. He collected a large booty, including 75 elephants.

His son, Muhammad Shah, was a worthless ruler and therefore his minister, Muhammad Khan Khalji, dethroned him and usurped the throne. He ruled from 1436 and 1469 A.D. He also waged wars against the rulers of Gujarat, Mewar and Delhi. His successors, Ghayas-ud-Din (1469—1500 A.D.) and Nasir-ud-Din (1500—1514 A.D.) ruled in peace.

Mahmud II ascended the throne in 1511 A.D. with the help of Madini Rai, chief of Chanderi. Madini completely overshadowed the Sultan and was virtual ruler. He did not treat his Muslim nobles well. Therefore, Sultan Mahmud invited Muzaffar Shah, the ruler of Gujarat, to help him in getting rid of Madini Rai. Madini Rai was, however, supported by Rana Sanga of Mewar in the struggle and Sultan Mahmud II was captured by the Rajputs but was set free later.

The rulers of Malwa continued to wage wars against the rulers of Gujarat and they had to pay a heavy price for this because in 1531 A.D. Bahadur Shah of Gujarat conquered Malwa.

During the reign of Humayun, the Mughal emperor, there was a struggle between the Mughals and Bahadur Shah. Humayun temporarily succeeded in becoming master of Gujarat but as soon as he went back to Delhi it was reconquered by Bahadur Shah.

In 1542 A.D. Sher Shah conquered Malwa and Baaz Bahadur became its governor. It was finally conquered by Akbar in 1561-62 A.D.

The rulers of Malwa were also great builders. Some of the famous buildings are Jama Masjid at Mandu, Hindola Mahal and Jahaz Mahal.

#### 4. Gujarat

It was a rich State, because of its maritime trade with foreign countries, and its wealth was therefore coveted by the Sultans of Delhi. Ala-ud-Din Khalji invaded and conquered it in 1297 A.D. Its ruler, Karan Dev, fled to the Deccan, leaving

his wife, Kamla Devi, a prisoner in the hands of the Muslim army. She was sent to Delhi where she was married to the Sultan. Gujarat remained a part of the Delhi Sultanate upto 1401 A.D. when after Timur's invasion, it broke away from the Sultanate.

Zafar Khan declared his independence in 1401 A.D. His successor, Ahmed Shah (1411-1442 A.D.) founded the city of Ahmadabad and built a number of palaces and mosques there.

The next important ruler was Abul Fateh Khan, better known as Mahmud Begarha. He ruled from 1458 to 1511 A.D. He was by far the most eminent ruler, famous for his justice and patronage of learning. He was a popular king, loved by his people. He was also a great conqueror and extended his kingdom by conquering Junagadh. He also fought against the Sultan of Ahmadnagar. He defeated the Portuguese also in 1508 A.D., but the next year they had their revenge and he was vanquished.

The last important ruler of the dynasty was Bahadur Shah who ruled from 1526 to 1537 A.D. As stated earlier, he conquered Malwa in 1531. There was a long war between the rulers of Gujarat and Mewar. He also had to fight a bitter struggle against Humayun and lost his kingdom but as soon as Humayun retreated from Gujarat, he reconquered it. He was treacherously murdered by the Portuguese. His successors were weak and in 1572 A.D. Gujarat was finally conquered by Akbar.

The rulers of Gujarat were also great builders and patrons of learning. Several beautiful monuments were constructed in various parts of the State, particularly in Ahmadabad.

## 5. Kashmir

It was a Hindu State up to 1346 A.D. when it was seized by Shams-ud-Din, better known as Shah Mirza, an adventurer from Swat, a region in north-west India. The most distinguished ruler of Kashmir was Zain-ul-Abdin, who ruled from 1420 to 1470 A.D. Under his enlightened and liberal rule, Kashmir made all round progress. He established peace and prosperity in the State and was affectionately known as "Budshan". He also encouraged music and painting and was a patron of Kashmiri and Persian literature. The *Mahabharata* and *Raj*

*Tarangini* were translated into Persian. After his death, there was a period of anarchy as his successors were not strong. Kashmir was finally conquered by Akbar in 1586 A.D.

## 6. Rajputana

It was a stronghold of the Rajputs who had several States, the two most famous being Mewar and Marwar.

### (a) Mewar

Mewar, or modern Udaipur, was the premier State of Rajputana and was ruled by the Guhila or the Sisodia Rajputs. It was founded by Bappa Rawal in the Seventh Century A.D. with its capital at Chittor.



*Tower of Victory, Chittor*

Because of its eminent position, the Sultans of Delhi coveted it and wanted to conquer it. Ala-ud-Din Khālji invaded it in-



1301 A.D. and for the next two years there was a heroic and bitter struggle between the Rajputs and the Muslims. Chittor was conquered by the Khaljis but Rana Hamir reconquered it later.

Another great ruler of Mewar was Rana Kumbha, who ruled in the 15th Century. He fought a number of wars against Malwa and Gujarat, the hereditary enemies of Mewar. In order to defend his kingdom he built a large number of forts. The most famous of them was the fort of Kumbhalgarh. He also constructed the "Jaya Stambha" or the "Kirti Stambha" after his victory over Malwa. In addition to being a great warrior, he was a great poet, musician and a patron of art and literature.

Another great ruler of the house of Mewar was Rana Sangram Singh, popularly known as a Rana Sanga. He was a grandson of Rana Kumbha and ascended the throne in 1509 A.D. He was perhaps the greatest military leader of his dynasty.

He bore scars of eighty wounds on his body. He had lost an arm, a leg and an eye and yet he was a powerful and inspiring leader in warfare. He defeated the rulers of Malwa, Delhi and Gujarat. His ambition was to build a Rajput empire on the ruins of the Delhi Sultanate. However, his dream was shattered by Babar, who defeated him at the battle of Khanua or Kanwaha in 1527 A.D.

Maharana Pratap, his grandson, who is famous both in legend and history, put up a heroic struggle against Akbar from 1572 to 1597 A.D. Though he lost a part of his kingdom, he did not surrender to the Mughals. The battle of Haldi Ghat in 1576 A.D. temporarily gave the Mughals an edge over the Rajputs but the Sisodia Rajputs refused to recognise the suzerainty of the Mughals. It was only in the reign of Jehangir that a treaty of friendship was made between Mewar and the Mughals.

#### **(b) Marwar or Jodhpur**

After the defeat of Jai Chand Rathor at the hands of Muhammad Ghori in 1294 A.D., the Rathors or Gahadvala Rajputs migrated to Rajputana where they founded the kingdom of Marwar or modern Jodhpur. They gradually extended their

sphere of influence under Maharaja Jodha who ruled in the middle of the 15th century. He extended the kingdom and conquered Chokri, Mandor, Sojat, Merta and Bikaner. Later Bika, one of the sons of Jodha, became an independent ruler of Bikaner.

Among the 17 sons of Jodha, there was a bitter struggle for succession which weakened the State in the long run. Its rulers were often at war with the Maharanas of Mewar.

When Akbar became ruler of Hindustan, he extended the hand of friendship to Marwar and its rulers accepted him as their overlord.

## DECCAN

The following were some of the important States of the Deccan :

### 1. Khandesh

It is the region just below the Vindhya mountains and lies in the valley of the Tapti. It was a part of the Sultanate but became independent under Malik Raju in 1388 A.D. soon after the death of Firuz Tughlaq. Burhanpur was its capital. Internal quarrels and frequent struggles with its southern neighbour, the Bahmani kingdom and with the rulers of Gujarat in the north-west considerably weakened it. It was conquered by Akbar in 1601 A.D. when the famous fort of Asirgarh fell to Mughal arms. It is said that very large booty fell into the hands of the conquerors and Akbar deputed his most trusted minister, Abul Fazal, to escort it to Agra.

### 2. Bahmani Kingdom

By far the most powerful state in the Deccan was the Bahmani Kingdom. It was founded in 1347 A.D. during the reign of Muhammad Tughlaq, who had allowed a large number of Persian nobles to settle in the Deccan. When Muhammad Tughlaq's schemes failed they rebelled against him, first under the leadership of Ismail Mukh, an Afghan and then under Hasan Bahman Shah Gangu, sir-named Abul Muzaffar Ala-ud-Din Bahman Shah, a Persian noble. The rebellion was successful and Bahman Shah succeeded in founding an independent

kingdom known as the Bahmani kingdom with Gulbarga as the capital.

There is a good deal of controversy over the origin of Bahman Shah. Some historians say that originally he was a servant of a Brahman astrologer named Gangu. Others say that he was a Persian nobleman. Whatever the origin, he was a very capable person and succeeded in establishing an independent Muslim State in the Deccan. He further consolidated it by extending its boundaries at the cost of his neighbours. His kingdom extended from Wainganga in the north to the river Krishna in the south and from the west coast to the Northern Sircars in the east. He set up an efficient system of administration, suppressed the nobles and established peace and order. His benevolent and progressive rule ensured prosperity and contentment to the people.

The kingdom was divided into four provinces under governors. As long as the central rulers were strong and powerful they kept the provincial governors under control but towards the close of the 15th Century the governors became disloyal and set up independent principalities for themselves.

Altogether 18 sultans ruled from 1347 to 1527 A.D.

### **Some of the important Successors**

Muhammad Shah I (1358-1377 A.D.) succeeded his father Hasan. He was a great administrator and warrior and waged several wars against Warangal and Vijayanagar and inflicted heavy losses on them.

Taj-ud-Din Firuz Shah (1397--1420 A.D.), the eighth ruler of the dynasty was a grandson of Hasan Bahman Shah. He was also a powerful and enlightened ruler. He knew several languages and was a great patron of learning. He also waged wars against the hereditary enemy, the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar, but after an initial success he was badly defeated by the latter in 1420 A.D. and was forced to abdicate in favour of his brother, Ahmad Shah.

Ahmad Shah (1420-1435 A.D.) was also a great warrior. He avenged his brother's defeat at the hands of the rulers of Vijayanagar and collected large booty. He transferred his capital to Bidar whose climate was better than that of Gulbarga. During his reign there was a struggle for power between the

Deccani nobles and the foreigners. The former were Sunni by faith and the latter who were mostly Persians were Shias. This struggle between the two sections of nobility considerably weakened the kingdom in the long run and was ultimately responsible for its downfall.

Humayun (1457-1461 A.D.) was the 11th ruler. He was a great tyrant and because of his cruelties was nick-named "Zalim". When he died, people breathed a sigh of relief.

Muhammad Shah III (1463-1482 A.D.) was the 13 ruler. He was easily the greatest Bahmani Sultan. He had a very loyal, able and just minister named Khwaja Jahan Mahmud Gawan. Under his ministership the State made all round progress. He extended the boundaries of the kingdom by defeating the Raja of Konkan in 1469 A.D. and the ruler of Orissa in 1478 A.D. He also captured Goa from Vijayanagar. He did not neglect administration either and set up a very efficient system of government. Himself a scholar, he was also a great patron of learning, his personal library being the best of its kind in those times.

However, his achievements roused the hostility and jealousy of the Deccani nobles who hatched a conspiracy against him. They produced a forged letter before the Sultan alleging Mahmud Gawan's complicity with the rulers of Vijayanagar. The Sultan believed the letter and ordered his execution. With his murder the good days of the Bahmani kingdom also came to an end and soon it began to disintegrate.

The weak successor of Muhammad Shah III could not hold the kingdom together and finally it was broken up into five independent principalities.

Kalim Ullah was the last ruler of the dynasty and in 1527 A.D. Amir Ali Barid, a Turkish noble, usurped the throne.

### **Chief Features of the Bahmani Kingdom**

It was a citadel of Muslim culture. Many of its Sultans were great scholars and patrons of learning, who encouraged Persian and Urdu literature. They were also great builders and constructed massive palaces and mosques. They also carried out several irrigation works which ensured prosperity of the kingdom. Some of the famous buildings were the Bijapur mosque, Gagan Mahal and Gole Gumbaz. The Sultan waged constant



wars against the rulers of Vijayanagar, Orissa and Warangal. These in the long run had a disastrous effect on the stability and solidarity of the kingdom and finally weakened it. The State also witnessed a good deal of intrigues, plots, depositions and murders. Out of the 18 Sultans, five were murdered, three deposed and two died of over-drinking.

### **Breakup of the Bahmani kingdom**

As mentioned earlier, the Bahmani kingdom broke up into five independent kingdoms one after another. These kingdoms were named after the title of their founders.

#### **1. Berar : 1484 A.D.**

It was the first to secede from the Bahmani kingdom in 1484 A.D. when Fateh Ullah Imad Shah, a converted Hindu, founded an independent kingdom. His dynasty was known as the Imad Shahi Dynasty. Its independent existence lasted for only 90 years and in 1574 A.D. it was conquered and annexed by Ahmadnagar.

#### **2. Bijapur : 1489-90 A.D.**

Yusuf Adil Shah, Governor of Bijapur, declared his independence and founded the Adil Shahi Dynasty. He was an enlightened ruler and therefore a large number of foreign scholars from Persia, Turkestan and Rum flocked to his court. Adil Shah also enriched the State by encouraging trade and industry.

Throughout its long history, its rulers waged a bitter struggle against the kingdom of Vijayanagar, the Portuguese, as well as other secessionist States of the Bahmani kingdom.

Since most of the nobles in Bijapur were of Persian origin, they followed the Shia faith. In 1686 A.D., Aurangzeb invaded it because it was a wealthy State and a Shia State. It was conquered and annexed by the Mughal rulers.

#### **3. Ahmadnagar : 1490 A.D.**

It was founded by Malik Ahmad who established the Nizam Shahi Dynasty. He built the famous city of Ahmadnagar, which had a chequered history. Its rulers waged wars with Vijayanagar and fought with other successor States of the Bahmani Kingdom.

It was the first Bahmani Kingdom to be invaded by the Mughals. Akbar sent a strong army under Prince Murad and Abdur Rahim Khan Khanan in 1595 A.D. but Ahmadnagar put up stout resistance under the inspiring leadership of Chand Bibi, the Dowager Queen of Bijapur. As long as she lived, the Mughals could do nothing. Ultimately they resorted to trickery and Chand Bibi was poisoned. It was only after her death that the Mughal armies could overrun parts of Ahmadnagar in 1600 A.D.

The struggle with the Mughals was resumed in the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jehan. Jahangir sent Prince Khurram to conquer Ahmadnagar in 1616 A.D. Malik Amber, a minister of Abyssinian origin, put up stiff resistance against the invaders. It was only after his death in 1626 A.D. that the Mughals succeeded in annexing more Ahmadnagar territory. Large portions of the State had already fallen to the Mughal armies earlier and in 1633 A.D. Shah Jahan succeeded in finally overrunning and annexing the remaining parts of Ahmadnagar. Husain Shah, the Sultan was captured and imprisoned in the fort of Gwalior.

#### **4. Golkunda : 1512 or 1518 A.D.**

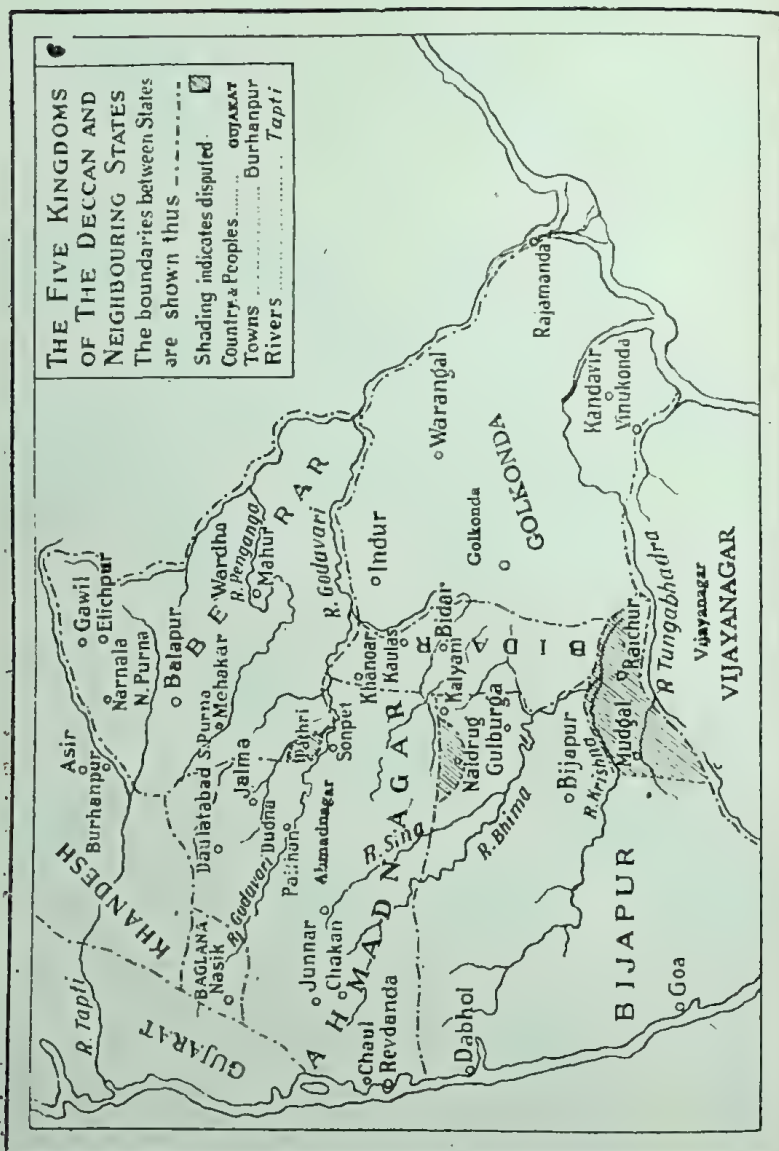
Another noble named Qutub Shah founded the independent kingdom of Golkunda and established the Qutub Shahi Dynasty. Like Bijapur it was also a rich and prosperous State and a very large number of people professed the Shia faith. It also waged constant wars against Vijayanagar and with other Bahmani kingdoms. In 1687 A.D. Aurangzeb successfully invaded it because it was a Shia State and was the richest Bahmani Kingdom. Henceforth it became part of the Mughal empire.

#### **5. Bidar : 1526 A.D.**

The remnants of the Bahmani Kingdom were now called Bidar and Amir Ali Barid, a powerful noble, deposed the last Sultan in 1526 A.D. and founded the Barid Shahi Dynasty. Its independence did not last long and it was annexed by Bijapur in 1618-19 A.D.

#### **Chief features of the Bahmani Kingdoms**

Each of the five Bahmani kingdoms tried to gain supremacy



in the Deccan and therefore there were continuous wars among them and also against the kingdom of Vijayanagar. They all encouraged trade and industry and brought about a good deal of prosperity to the people. Bijapur and Golkunda were fabulously rich. The rulers were great patrons of literature and the fine arts and attracted some of the best scholars, poets and musicians to their kingdoms. They set up glamorous courts which were greatly admired by several foreign visitors who were deeply impressed by the grandeur of the sultans and court etiquette. The rulers were also great builders and built several forts, mosques and palaces. However, their history is full of intrigues and counter-intrigues by the nobles in order to gain ascendancy at court. This inter-noble rivalry and frequent wars weakened the kingdoms and brought about their downfall.

### THE KINGDOM OF VIJAYNAGAR

Ala-ud-Din Khalji had conquered practically the whole of the Deccan and Hindu Rajas of the south had been forced to acknowledge his suzerainty. However, the hold of the Muslim Sultans over the Deccan region depended upon the personality and the power of the Sultan. In order to keep the Hindu nobles under control, Muhammad Bin Tughlaq transferred his capital to Devagiri, renamed Daulatabad, but this was an ill conceived project and its failure considerably undermined his prestige and power. The failure of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq's other fantastic schemes emboldened the Hindu rajas to reassert their independence.

In 1336 A.D. when the sultan's prestige stood very low, Harihar and Bukka, two sons of Sangam, founded the independent kingdom of Vijayanagar with the twin object, first to stop the advance of the Muslim conqueror from the north, and secondly to preserve the unity, culture and religion of the Hindu States of the Deccan.

Vijayanagar had a glorious history from 1336 to 1565 A.D. During this period it was ruled by three dynasties, namely, (a) the Sangam Dynasty 1336-1486 A.D., (b) the Saluva Dynasty 1486-1505 A.D., and (c) the Taluva Dynasty (1505-1565 A.D.).

#### **The Sangam Dynasty: 1336-1486 A.D.**

Hari Har I and Bukka I were sons of Sangam and hence the



dynasty founded by them was known as the Sangam Dynasty. These joint rulers extended their kingdom, annexing neighbouring territories. Bukka I even sent an ambassador to China in 1374 A.D. The history of Vijayanagar is the story of an unbroken record of bloody wars against the Bahmani kingdom and its successor States. The main bone of contention between the two was the possession of the Raichur Doab, the land between the rivers Krishna and the Tungabhadra. Because of its fertility it was coveted by both and changed hands frequently.

Dev Rai II (1422-1446 A.D.) was the greatest ruler of the Sangam Dynasty. Under him industry and overseas trade considerably enriched the country. He was also a great conqueror and an able administrator. During his reign, two foreigners visited the kingdom. The first was an Italian named Nicolo Conti who came in 1420 A.D. The other was Abdur Razaq, a Persian, who visited Vijayanagar in 1443 A.D. They both admired the city and were highly impressed by the grandeur of the court and the prosperity of the people. Abdur Razaq mentioned that there were 300 ports from where trade was carried on with Malaya, Burma, China, Arabia, Persia, South Africa and even Portugal.

The last ruler of the Sangam Dynasty was Virupaksh II. He was a worthless and incompetent prince, and was responsible for considerable confusion and disorder in the kingdom. Therefore he was deposed in 1486 A.D. This deposition is called the "First Usurpation" by historians. It brought about the end of the Sangam Dynasty.

#### **The Saluva Dynasty : 1486-1507 A.D.**

Narasimha Saluva founded the new dynasty. He was a strong man and succeeded in restoring order and consolidating the kingdom. He recovered the lost provinces. However, his successor Imadi Narasimha was a weak ruler and was deposed by Vir Narasimha. This incident is called the 'Second Usurpation'.

#### **The Taluva Dynasty : 1505-1565 A.D.**

Vir Narasimha, the founder of the Taluva Dynasty was originally a general in the army of Vijayanagar.

Krishna Dev Raya (1509-1530 A.D.) was the greatest ruler of

this dynasty. He was brave and strong and a successful warrior, suppressing the feudatory chiefs and bringing them under control. In 1512 A.D. he reconquered the Raichur Doab from the Sultan of Bijapur. In 1513-14 A.D. he defeated the Hindu Rajas of Orissa and conquered Udaigiri and in 1520 A.D. he defeated Bijapur again and overran a large portion of its territory.

In addition to being a great conqueror he was an efficient administrator. He also patronised art, learning and literature and beautified Vijayanagar. He maintained friendly relations with the Portuguese. His encouragement and patronage of trade and industry brought a good deal of prosperity. He was a man of liberal views on religion and a just ruler. Domingo Paes, a Portuguese who visited Vijayanagar during his reign, paid a high compliment to him by calling him "gallant and perfect in all things". Vijayanagar reached the highest point of its glory in his reign.

His successors were weak and once again factions among the nobles and their intrigues considerably weakened the kingdom. The weak Rajas were mere puppets in their hands. The last of them, Sada Shiv Rai, was only a nominal ruler. Real power lay in the hands of his minister, Ram Rai, who was strong and naughty. He fished in the troubled waters of the Bahmani kingdom and took advantage of their mutual rivalries and jealousies. In alliance with one, he would wage wars against the others and achieve temporary success. In 1543 A.D. in alliance with Ahmadnagar and Golkunda, he defeated Bijapur. In 1558 A.D. in alliance with Bijapur and Golkunda, he defeated Ahmadnagar and sacked the city. His ruthless behaviour completely alienated the people of Ahmadnagar and also roused the hostility of the Sultans of Bijapur and Golkunda and the three States combined together to teach him a lesson.

#### **The Battle of Talikota : 1565 A.D.**

The unscrupulous diplomacy and cruelties in Ahmadnagar were ultimately responsible for antagonising all the Bahmani kingdoms. Therefore, Golkunda, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Bidar made an alliance and declared war on Vijayanagar. A momentous battle was fought at Talikota in 1565 A.D. The Bahmani kingdoms were victorious. Ram Rai was killed and

the magnificent city of Vijayanagar was mercilessly plundered. The temples were destroyed and a large number of people were killed and substantial booty fell into the hands of the allies.

### **Importance of the Battle of Talikota**

It was as important in the history of the Deccan as was the first battle of Panipat (1526 A.D.) in the history of northern India. The defeat of Vijayanagar shattered the hopes of Hindu supremacy in the south and opened the gates for further Muslim expansion. It resulted in destruction on a large scale. Beautiful temples and palaces were destroyed and the vast wealth accumulated by the wise rulers of Vijayanagar looted. The kingdom which once won the admiration of many foreigners was reduced to shambles.

Vijayanagar never regained its lost glory. The new capital at Penugonda could not compare with the magnificent city of Vijayanagar. The breakup of the remnant of the kingdom of Vijayanagar was further hastened by the rivalry and faithlessness of the feudatory chiefs and several independent kingdoms, such as Mysore, Tanjore and Madurai were set up in the 17th Century.

## **THE CONDITION OF VIJAYANAGAR**

### **A. Political**

The form of government was centralised monarchy. The king was the fountain-head of civil and military authority. Though he enjoyed unlimited powers he was not an irresponsible despot. He ruled for the welfare of the people and safeguarded their rights and interests. He was guided by the principle, "The king should rule according to Dharma". He encouraged trade, industry and agriculture and enriched the State.

He was assisted by a Council of Ministers, appointed by him and responsible to him. Under this Council, there was an army of officers, clerks and various other employees in the secretariat. The Brahmanas were held in high esteem and often occupied high offices.

The kings set up magnificent courts attended by a number of scholars, astrologers, musicians, etc. The grandeur of the courts was admired by several foreign visitors who were deeply

impressed by court etiquette and the affluence of the king and the nobles. Rulers celebrated a number of festivals such as Diwali, Holi, etc., which were extremely colourful.

Vijayanagar was a rich State. The following were the chief sources of income.

Land revenue or "sist" was a little more than one-sixth of the produce and could be paid in cash or kind. The land was divided into three categories : wet, dry and orchard and woods, according to the fertility of the soil. In addition to these taxes the State charged grazing tax, marriage tax, custom duties and toll on roads. Taxation on the whole was rather heavy.

### **Administration of Justice**

The king was the supreme judge and under him there was a hierarchy of courts throughout the kingdom. Trial was based on custom and tradition of a locality, and therefore it was not uniform throughout the kingdom. Punishments were rather severe. Common punishments were fine, confiscation of property, mutilation and in extreme cases even the death penalty was imposed. Sometimes criminals were cast before elephants to be trampled by them. It must have been a ghastly sight but such punishments were quite common in mediaeval times.

### **The Army**

The strength of the king depended entirely upon the efficiency of his army and therefore, it was well organised. It was a large army consisting of infantry, cavalry and elephants. The Royal Army was supplemented by the contingents of feudatory chiefs in times of war. Recruitment to the army was open to all communities including Muslims. Great stress was laid on the cavalry and often horses were imported from Ormuz through the Portuguese in order to improve its efficiency.

In spite of all these measures the discipline tended to be lax.

### **Provincial Administration**

The kingdom was divided into six principal provinces each under a governor popularly known as 'Naik' who exercised several military and judicial powers and in his own province was extremely powerful. Under strong rulers, regular accounts of income and expenditure were submitted by him to the central



authority but when the rulers were weak, he tended to defy the central authority.

The provinces were further subdivided into 'Nadus' or 'Kottams', the sub-divisions consisting of a number of villages. Each village was a self-sufficient unit with an assembly to administer it. It enjoyed large powers and dealt with practically all problems of village administration.

### **Weaknesses in the Administration**

Though the rulers had tried to eliminate all possibilities of the breakdown of the administration under weak rulers, the following weaknesses came to the surface and were largely responsible for the breakup of the kingdom later.

First, the provincial governors became powerful and ambitious and tended to defy the central authority. Secondly, it was a mistake on the part of the rulers to allow the Portuguese to settle along the western coast. In the long run they created many problems for the rulers and finally set up a small empire for themselves in the west. Thirdly, though a large number of enlightened rulers encouraged commerce, industry and agriculture, there was no sustained effort on the part of all rulers to develop these with the result that the long wars against the Bahmani kingdoms drained away much of the wealth accumulated by wise rulers. Consequently the State tended to become bankrupt.

### **B. Social Conditions**

Society was divided mainly into three categories, the nobles, the middle class and the masses. The nobles were extremely rich and lived a life of luxury and comfort in beautiful mansions. The middle class consisted mostly of traders, businessmen, industrialists and others in various professions. On the whole they lived comfortably well. The masses, by and large, lived in peace but groaned under heavy taxation.

Women enjoyed great respect and held high positions, taking part in political and literary activities. Some were appointed as bailiffs and judges. Some of them even showed interest in wrestling and wielded the sword. They were fond of music, dancing and other fine arts. Quite a few were astrologers.

Polygamy among the kings and nobles was common and

child marriage was in vogue. Parents of girls had to give large amounts of money in dowry. The institution of 'Sati' also existed.

The Brahmanas exercised predominant influence in society and were held in high esteem. People ate both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food. It consisted mostly of grains, vegetables, milk and fruit. Meat eating was common and people hunted animals and birds and were fond of mutton, venison, pork, etc. Even rats and lizards were sometimes eaten perhaps by the poor sections of society.

### **The City of Vijayanagar**

It was a grand and picturesque city situated on the banks of the Tungabhadra. It had massive fortifications and covered a circumference of sixty miles. The entire city was surrounded by seven walls. Within the walled city were farms, orchards, tanks, bazars, industrial workshops and residential houses. Inside the central wall was the king's palace.

Foreign travellers were deeply impressed by the grandeur of the city and the court. Nicolo Conti, an Italian, visited the city in 1420 A.D. Abdur Razaq, a Persian, visited it in 1442-43 A.D. Both noted that the king was fabulously rich and a large number of people wore jewels. About the city of Vijayanagar, Abdur Razaq remarked, "The city is such that eyes have not seen, nor ears heard of any place resembling it upon the whole earth".

Domingo Paes, a Portuguese traveller, also testified to the wealth of Vijayanagar. He said that the king had much treasure, a large army and carried on prosperous trade. The city of Vijayanagar, according to him, was as large as Rome with beautiful parks, tanks, orchards, etc. The most interesting place was the Ivory Room in the palace. Nuniz, another foreign traveller, who came in 1555 A.D., was highly impressed by court ceremonial.

It is clear from the accounts of foreign travellers given above that the kingdom must have been very prosperous when it could afford to have such a grand capital.

### **C. Economic Conditions**

It was a wealthy and prosperous kingdom. Agriculture

flourished and there was a wide network of irrigation. A large number of people lived in villages, cultivated lands and were fairly well off.

In addition, the kings patronised industry. The most popular industries were textiles, mining, metallurgy and perfumery. Each industry was organised under a corporation which was responsible for production and distribution and which also looked after the welfare of the workers and artisans. Overseas trade with countries of the East and the West brought much wealth. Both Abdur Razaq and Nuniz said that there were about 300 ports, big and small, from where ships sailed to foreign countries. The Indians made their own ships which sailed the high seas and carried rice, iron, sugar, spices, etc., to the Malay archipelago, Burma and China in the East and to Arabia, Persia, South Africa, Algeria and Portugal in the West. Vijayanagar also imported horses, copper, coral and velvet.

Inland trade was equally progressive and merchants carried their goods from one place to another on pack horses, bullock carts, donkeys, etc. Since it was a prosperous State, kings issued gold and silver coins. The standard of living of the nobles was very high though the poor masses found it difficult to make the two ends meet.

#### **D. Cultural Development**

The kings patronised art and literature. Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil and Kannada literature were encouraged by them. Krishna Deva Raya was a great scholar himself and wrote both in Telugu and Sanskrit. Some of the famous writers of this period were Sayana, Madhava and Peddana. Under Krishna Deva Raya, there were eight famous Telugu poets who were known as "Ashta Diggajas" (Eight Elephants).

Many books on music, dancing, grammar, philosophy and poetry were produced during this period.

The kings also built a number of temples which were decorated with paintings and sculptures.

#### **The kingdom of Orissa**

It was founded about 1076 A.D. by Ananta Varman Choda who was the founder of the Ganga Dynasty. The boundaries of Orissa extended from the Ganges to Godavari. Narasimha I,

who ruled from 1238 to 1264 A.D. was the most famous ruler. He completed the temple of Jagannath at Puri and also built the famous temple of Sun-god at Konarak.

About 1435 A.D. the Ganga Dynasty was overthrown by the Gajapati Dynasty. The rulers of Orissa waged frequent wars with the Bahmani Kingdom and Vijayanagar. These wars proved very expensive and in the long run impoverished the State. Pratap Rudra was the last important ruler of Orissa. He ruled from 1497 to 1540 A.D. He was a disciple of the Hindu saint Chaitanya. After his death the kingdom declined rapidly and Orissa was conquered by Suleman Kararani of Bengal in 1568 A.D. Akbar, the great Mughal, conquered it in 1576 A.D.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### CONDITIONS OF SOCIETY UNDER THE SULTANATE

THE conquest of Hindustan by Muhammad Ghori in the last decade of the 12th Century was a landmark in the history of India. It marked the end of the big Hindu kingdoms and instead led to the establishment of the first Muslim empire called the 'Sultanate'. It lasted from 1206 to 1526 A.D.

When two or more races come into close contact as a result of invasions, conquests or trade, their cultures are bound to react on one another in proportion to their superiority and consequently bring about changes in the existing political, social and cultural conditions. A superior culture is apt to assimilate people of the inferior culture quickly. The early invaders of India in the ancient period were absorbed in Indian culture without much difficulty because of the superiority of the latter. They adopted Indian religions and in due course of time were completely Indianised. But even they brought about certain changes in Indian social and religious patterns. The split in Buddhism under Kanishka into Mahayana and Hinayana was due to the influence of foreigners.

The Muslim conquerors of the 12th Century onwards were highly civilised people. They had their own distinct culture and religion. Their conquest of India was bound to affect Hindu culture and religion. In due course of time both influenced each other and brought about many changes.

In the following pages, we shall discuss the impact of these two cultures on the political, social and cultural life of the people.

#### A. POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Sultanate was a theocracy, i.e., there was no distinction

between political and religious affairs. Since politics and religion were allied, the Ulemas—people well versed in Muslim religion and law—wielded much power and exercised considerable influence on the Muslim masses. Any 'Fatwa' (order) issued by them against a ruler was, therefore, likely to have great significance. When Razia ascended the throne they proclaimed that a woman could not rule over men and incited the people to rebel against her. However, the power and influence of these Ulemas was in inverse proportion to the strength of the ruler. Sultans such as Ala-ud-Din Khalji and Muhammad Tughlaq, kept them under control and even defied them.

Some Sultans sought the blessings of the caliphs, the political and religious heads of the Muslim world, in order to strengthen their position on the throne. In such cases the 'Khutba' or the sermon to the people was read in his name by the Imam after prayers on Fridays. Though recognition was accorded to some Sultans, in actual practice the caliphs did not interfere in the affairs of the State at all.

### Central Government

The Sultans were all-powerful, though there were two main checks on their authority, firstly the law of the Quran or 'Shariat', which was interpreted by the Ulemas, and secondly, the nobility. However, if the Sultan was strong and powerful, he kept both of them under control. The duty of the Sultan was to maintain law and order, lead his forces in times of war, protect the country from foreign invasions and suppress internal rebellions. He was the chief law-giver and formed the final court of appeal. The power, respect and prestige of the sultan depended entirely upon his personality. The stronger he was the greater and more successful was his control over the nobles and the Ulemas. Under weak and incompetent Sultans the nobles rebelled and tried to set up their own independent principalities.

There was no fixed law of succession, hence the death of the Sultan often caused a civil war or rebellion among the nobles. Because of uncertainty about succession there were often plots and counter-plots by ambitious princes and nobles.

Though the Sultan was an autocrat, he could not possibly govern the country single-handed. Therefore, he appointed a Council of Ministers consisting of his trusted men who were

solely responsible to him. They were placed in charge of various departments and carried out the Sultan's orders. Their advice was not binding on the ruler.

### His Court

The Sultan maintained a magnificent court where solemnity and strict court etiquette were maintained. In Balban's Court no one could laugh or crack jokes. The courtiers had to appear in court in ceremonial dress. The Sultans received nobles, Khans, Amirs, Maliks, etc., in the 'Bar-i-Khas'. He consulted them on affairs of State.

The Sultan also met the general public at the 'Bar-i-Am' to hear their complaints and petitions and thus he kept himself in touch with his people.

His chief officers were the Wazir (equivalent to the Prime Minister), Mozumdar (Revenue Minister), Saddar-i-Sadur (Minister for Religious Affairs), Qazi-ul-Qazat (Minister of Justice) and Kotwal. The last named officer exercised magisterial and judicial functions.

### Administration of Justice

The Qazi-ul-Qazat was the head of the Judicial Department. There were no fixed laws or uniformity in the pattern of trial. The Muslims were tried according to 'Shariat', while the Hindus were tried according to custom and tradition. There was summary trial and summary judgement and cases did not remain pending in courts for long. The institution of torture to exhort confessions was common. Punishments were severe, for major crimes even the death penalty being imposed. Other common punishments were mutilation, exile and imprisonment. Old forts were used as prisons and the conditions in them were abominable.

In order to check crimes, the Sultan had a [number of spies and 'Mohtasibs' or censors of public morals. They kept a check on the activities of the nobles and any lapse on their part was immediately reported to the Sultan.

### Sources of Income

There were several sources of income of the State. The Hindu nobles and landlords paid land tax or "Khiraj" which

amounted from  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{5}$  of the produce. From the crown lands (khalsa lands), land revenue was collected by the local officials. Another form of taxation was the institution of "Iqta" under which land was granted to officers in lieu of their salaries and they were called 'Muqtas'. They were entitled to collect revenue from their land and after their own expenses, remitted a fixed amount to the Sultan. War booty or "Khamas" were another profitable source of income. Normally the share of the State was one-fifth of the spoils. The Muslims paid a religious tax called "Zakat" which amounted to one-tenth of their income. The Hindus had to pay the Jazia tax, Brahmanas being normally exempted from this levy. Other minor taxes were water tax, grazing tax, house tax, custom duty, etc. Taxes could be paid both in cash and kind but it seems that the taxation was fairly high as the people groaned under heavy taxation.

### Army Organisation

The army formed the backbone of the Sultan's strength. Therefore special care was taken to maintain an efficient and disciplined army. The standing army of the Sultan consisted of infantry, cavalry and elephants. In times of war it was supplemented by the contingents of viceroys and of the vassal chiefs. In addition, the king had his own bodyguard which guarded his person and his palace. The chief weapons of warfare were swords, spears, daggers, bows and arrows. Soldiers also used helmets and shields. Sometimes naphtha rockets and balls were also used. They were thrown into the ranks of the enemy or inside the forts by crude machines called "Manjaniqs" and "Mangonels".

The efficiency of the army was considerably undermined under Firuz Tughlaq who recruited soldiers on a hereditary basis and therefore a large number of incompetent and weak soldiers found their way into the army.

### Provincial Administration

The Sultanate was divided into a number of provinces, which ranged from about 20 to 25. In each province, a Viceroy, Governor, Naib Sultan were appointed from among the big nobles to look after its administration. They wielded vast powers within



their own jurisdiction, and the control of the central authority on them depended upon the personality of the Sultan. Under weak rulers governors tended to rebel and declare their independence. They had to maintain law and order in their provinces, collect revenue and render an account of income and expenditure to the Central Government. In times of war they were called upon to fight for the Sultan with their contingents.

Provinces were further divided into smaller units or modern districts, which were placed under 'Muqtas' or 'Amils'. These were further sub-divided into Parganas and villages under Shiqdars. In villages the institution of Panchayats existed and practically all local affairs were settled by it. The village headman or Muqaddam was the principal village officer. He was assisted by a Patwari and Qanungo who maintained records of lands and was primarily responsible for collecting land revenue.

### **Drawbacks of the Administration**

There were several defects in the administration which came to the surface under weak rulers. First, the administration was not based on the support of the people. By and large, they were completely indifferent to a change of government. Secondly, ambitious nobles posed an enormous threat to the State. Rivalries amongst them and their vested interests weakened the State. The Police State which depended upon the strength and prestige of the Sultan was bound to collapse under weak successors.

## **B. SOCIAL CONDITIONS**

Consequent on the Muslim conquest of Hindustan, there was a great influx of Muslims from Turkestan, Persia, Afghanistan, etc. Their religion, languages and social customs were different from those of the Hindus. Under the impact of Islam a number of Hindus were converted, mostly from the lower castes. The Muslim community was divided into several groups, namely the nobility, the priestly class or the Ulemas, the middle class and the masses.

### **Condition of the Muslims**

The Muslim nobles were mostly of foreign stock. They were

either Persians, Turks, Afghans or Arabs. They were divided according to their occupations. The Turks and Afghans were soldiers, the Sayyads were associated with religion, law and learning, and the Sheikhs formed the business community. These groups had little in common and were very much like the Hindu castes. Inter-marriage was not popular.

The Ulemas or the Muslim divines wielded considerable influence in religious matters and when the Sultans were weak they interfered in political matters also. The middle class followed different professions. They were businessmen, traders, Hakims, Muftis or petty law officers, etc., and mostly lived in towns. The lower class or the masses were mostly farmers, labourers, artisans, craftsmen and soldiers. Except for their religious beliefs there was no difference between them and their Hindu neighbours in the style of living. They still retained many Hindu customs and also observed Hindu festivals and normally there were no communal quarrels among the Hindus and the Muslims. They lived as good neighbours.

Besides, there was a large number of slaves, both men and women. Some were foreigners, others Indians. No rights were granted to them by their masters but if they worked well, they were set free. The institution of slavery was practically universal at the time. The slaves provided cheap labour and were also a source of income to their masters because quite often they were sold for a substantial price. When they were set free they could aspire to the highest position in the State. Qutub-ud-Din Aibak, Iltutmash and Balban started their political careers as slaves but finally became Sultans. Under Iltutmash they were organised into a corps which helped the Sultan in governing the country. Under his successors, however, they became powerful and proved a nuisance to the Sultans.

Muslim women observed purdah and seldom came out of their homes in the open. Muslims were divided into watertight compartments and men and women lived in separate apartments. Men visited the 'Zanana' only for meals. Drinking wine was a common vice of the Muslim nobility. Ala-ud-Din introduced prohibition. The upper Muslim class spoke Persian but the rest of the community continued to speak the regional languages. Muslim nobles enjoyed Indian music and dancing.

### **Influence of Hinduism**

The Sultans and nobles adopted certain Indian manners and customs. They copied Hindu rulers in their dress and wore golden brocade. They also carried Indian swords and daggers. Elephants, which were the emblem of Hindu royalty, were also owned by them. Several practices of Hindu courts were also copied by the Sultans. In addition to Muslim festivals they also celebrated Hindu festivals such as Dussehra, Diwali, Holi, etc. Even after conversion to Islam, many Muslims retained several Hindu customs regarding marriages and festivals.

### **Conditions of the Hindus**

A large majority of the people were Hindus. One by one the Hindu Rajas lost their political power and accepted the suzerainty of the Muslim rulers. Most Sultans were tolerant towards their Hindu subjects though there were instances of forced conversion and demolition of Hindu temples. Hindus had to pay the Jazia tax. High posts were invariably reserved for the Muslims but there were instances when Hindus were appointed as governors and commanders. Samar Singh Jain was appointed Governor of Telengana in the reign of Muhammad Tughlaq and Madani Rai became regent in Malwa. Hindus were mostly employed in subordinate positions, particularly in the Revenue Department. They were also recruited as soldiers. Even Mahmud of Ghazni had recruited Hindus in his army. The Hindus excelled as artisans and masons and were particularly responsible for building some of the great monuments of the period.

However, the impact of Islam brought certain changes in the social customs of the Hindus also. First, the caste system became more rigid for fear of conversion. Secondly, women lost much of their freedom and like the Muslims they also began to observe 'purdah'. Thirdly, child marriage and 'Sati' became more common.

## **C. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS**

India was a fabulously rich country in mediaeval times. All foreigners who visited it were highly impressed by its wealth, the grandeur of the courts and the magnificent buildings. Indian trade with foreign countries was largely responsible for

this prosperity. It brought in much wealth and money into the fertile 'land of gold'. In spite of Mahmud of Ghazni's raids and loot and the sack of Delhi and other towns in northern India by Timur, India was still a rich country.

Industrial development and trade were largely responsible for this acquisition of wealth. In the past all industries were controlled by guilds. The system continued under the Sultanate. The Sultans patronised and encouraged industry and royal 'Karkhanas' or workshops but they were modest in size and output when compared with modern factories. A large number of slaves were employed in them. The most popular industries were textile, dyeing, metal work, sugar and pottery. In addition, weapons, liquors, etc., were produced in the country. The towns were the centre of industry, business and trade. They were usually divided into several sectors. Each class of artisan lived in one Mohalla (small sector). For example, the goldsmiths, the weavers, the potters, etc., lived in separate sectors. Every town had a market place. In addition fairs were frequently held where brisk trade was carried on. Trade between town and town and with foreign countries was common. Indian goods, cotton and woollen cloth, sugar, spices, precious stones, etc., were exported to Europe, countries in South-East Asia and Central Asia and Persia and Afghanistan. Land trade was carried on by caravans while Indian ships sailed to distant lands with their precious cargoes. Ship-building was a flourishing industry and there were a number of ports in Gujarat, Bengal and the Deccan. Horses and luxury goods for the nobles were imported.

Prices in normal times were not high but they were not uniform throughout the Sultanate. They rose in times of famine and political upheavals. Ala-ud-Din tried the experiment of price control successfully by fixing the prices of essential commodities so that the poor might not suffer by the rise in prices. He controlled black marketing by stringent measures and punished offenders severely.

It is difficult to say what the average income of a man was during this period but we know that the nobles lived in luxury and grand style though the masses groaned under heavy taxation and could just meet their family needs which were not many.



India continued to be an essentially agricultural country. To encourage agriculture, some Sultans spread a network of canals. In normal times the villagers were fairly well off financially but in times of famine they were hit hard. Each village was practically self-sufficient economically and villagers normally were not affected by political upheavals, invasions, rebellions or civil wars.

#### D. CULTURAL CONDITIONS

The Muslim religion and culture had a deep impact on Hindu religion and culture. Islam preached the gospel of one God and equality of human beings. Its religious leaders, the Ulemas, were narrow-minded. They wielded much influence on the Sultans and their political policies. Only Ala-ud-Din and Muhammad Tughlaq ignored them and kept them under control. However, there was another class of Muslim holy men who were called the Sufis. They were liberal in their religious outlook. They believed in the doctrine of love of God and service to mankind. They had their disciples both among the Hindus and Muslims. They were different from other Muslim holy men because they encouraged devotional songs or Qawalis and Indian music. Some of them were Khwaja Muin-ud-Din Chishti of Ajmer, Bawa Farid-ud-Din of Pakpatan and Nizam-ud-Din Auliya of Delhi.

#### **The Impact of Islam on Hinduism**

Islam had its impact on Hinduism in two fields. It made the Hindus more orthodox and conservative and the Hindu caste rules became more rigid for fear of conversion. It also gave an impetus to liberal reformatory movement in Hinduism. The Bhakti cult which believed in a personal God and which had started in the south in an earlier age, received great momentum under the influence of the Sufi philosophers. The saints of the Bhakti movement denounced ritualism, sacrifices, fasting, etc., enjoined by the Brahmanas. They believed in the equality of all men and the unity of God. They held that through devotion and love one could attain God. They did not believe in idol worship either. Through devotional songs one could reach the state of ecstasy and feel the presence of God. Hymns and

Bhajans written and sung by the great saints in different regional languages became extremely popular.

These saints belonged to all parts of India. In a previous chapter we have already read about the saints of Tamil Nadu. There were several new apostles of the Bhakti cult in this period. Ramanand of Allahabad was a great worshipper of Rama. Another saint, Vallabha propagated the worship of Krishna, but by far the most reputed and admired saint was Chaitanya of Bengal, a follower of the Vaishnav cult. He lived from 1485 to 1533 A.D., travelled all over the country and carried the message of love and devotion to distant parts. His hymns mystified thousands of people, both Hindus and Muslims. Nam Dey, another saint, spread the gospel of devotion to a personal God in Maharashtra. Another great saint of the period was Kabir, who lived in the 15th Century. His parentage is obscure. He was brought up in a Muslim weaver's family but was a disciple of Ramanand. He was also influenced by the Muslim Sufis and preached the gospel of love of God, equality and service to mankind and tried to promote communal harmony. He held that Ram and Rahim were different names of the same God. His 'dohas' or couplets are extremely popular even today. He was equally loved and admired by Hindus and Muslims. It is said that when he died, they began to quarrel over the disposal of his body. The Hindus wanted to cremate him according to Hindu rites and the Muslims wanted to bury him. When they removed the shroud from over his body, they found only flowers, which were divided among them.

Mira Bai, the Princess of Mewar, was another saint. She was a great devotee of Krishna and her devotional songs are sung enthusiastically even to this day.

By far the greatest religious reformer of this period was Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. He was born in 1469 A.D. at Nankana, now in Pakistan, in a middle class family. From early childhood he had a religious bent of mind. He wanted to end all religious strifes by bringing harmony among the followers of different religions. He preached the gospel of universal love and toleration and like other saints believed in one God and the equality of all classes. Among his followers he ensured equality by insisting they should eat together from the same kitchen (Langar). His sermons were attended by both men

and women and were compiled in the form of a book called 'Adigranth'. This is the sacred book of the Sikhs. In the 16th and 17 Centuries the Sikhs became a militant class under their gurus.

All the saints of the Bhakti movement were inspired by the philosophy of the Upanishads and wanted to simplify the Hindu religion and purify it of its ritualism. They carried the message of love and devotion in regional languages and thus enriched them. The Bhakti movement had two social effects also. First, it denounced the Hindu caste system and secondly, it tried to raise the status of women in society and restore to them the place of honour and respect which they enjoyed in the Vedic age.

### Literature

There was great literary activity throughout the period of the Sultanate. Not only the sultans of Delhi but every provincial ruler encouraged learning and patronised scholars. Regional languages received a great impetus on account of the Bhakti movement. The saints spoke to their disciples and sang hymns in their own languages. Thus Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, etc., were considerably enriched. Hindi in particular was popularised by Ramanand, Kabir and Mira Bai. Even some Muslims wrote in Hindi and the most prominent example was Malik Muhammad Jayasi, who was a great Hindi poet. Nanak preached in Punjabi and Gurmukhi. The Muslim rulers of Bengal patronised Bengali and the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were translated into it.

A number of books on religion, philosophy and drama were produced during this period, particularly in the Deccan.

Above all Persian literature was patronised the most by the Muslim rulers. Even Hindu nobles and others who were ambitious to get high posts at the imperial court or under provincial governors learnt and mastered it. Several sultans and provincial rulers were themselves great scholars. Their patronage and learning attracted a large number of foreigners to their courts. Delhi was the biggest centre of learning in northern India. In addition, Jullundur, Firuzabad and Jaunpur were also great seats of higher education. During this period a variety of literary books on drama, prose and poetry were



produced. The greatest literary figure of the period was Amir Khusrav, the mystic poet who wrote both in Persian and Hindi. Hasan-i-Dehlvi was another noted writer of this age. The Muslims were great historians and a number of historical works were compiled by them. They provide an invaluable source of history of the period. Some of these historians were foreigners and others Indian. Alberuni and Ibn-i-Batuta were foreigners. The Indian historians were Minhaj-ud-Din Siraj, the author of *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Amir Khusrav who wrote *Tarikh-i-Alai*, Zia-ud-Din Barni, a contemporary of Muhammad Tughlaq; Firuz Shah who wrote *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*; Shams-i-Siraj Afif, another biographer was the author of *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi* and Yahya Bin Ahmad who wrote *Tarikh-i-Mubarakshahi*. All these books have been translated into English for the benefit of those who could not read Persian.

Another important literary development of the period was the growth of Urdu. Urdu means a camp or cantonment. It was the language of the merchants and traders who wanted to sell their goods to the Persian nobles and commanders. It was a blend of Turki, Persian and Hindi. The birth of a new language signified attempt at linguistic synthesis. Urdu is a purely Indian language and is spoken by both Hindus and Muslims. In later periods it acquired a rich literature both in prose and poetry and was considerably patronised by the Mughal rulers. It is wrong to call it a language of the Muslims only. Even now it is widely spoken in Delhi, U.P. and the Deccan, particularly in old Hyderabad State.

### Art and architecture

The Muslim rulers were great builders. Muslim architecture had a distinct style. Its chief characteristics were perfect arches, domes and high minarets. But it was also influenced by Hindu-style architecture like other aspects of Muslim culture for various reasons. First, the craftsmen, artisans and sculptors were predominantly Hindus. Secondly, the material used for Muslim buildings was mostly provided by Hindu and Jain temples. Sometimes certain Hindu buildings were just modified by the Muslims and converted into mosques. The most prominent example of this modification is the Adhai din ka Jhompra in Ajmer. It was a Jain temple which was converted into a mosque



within 2½ days according to tradition. Hindu temples were beautifully ornamented and decorated with carvings of gods and goddesses. This decorative style was also adopted by the Muslims, who inscribed verses of Quran on most of their mosques and other buildings. The influence of the Hindu style is more predominantly marked in the case of Muslim buildings in Jaunpur, Bengal and the Bahmani kingdom and in Delhi and its neighbourhood. Some of the famous buildings of this period are Qutub Minar and the mosque nearby, Atai Darwaza, the fort of Tughlaqabad, Firuzshah Kotla and the Lodi Tombs in Delhi. The Sharqi rulers of Jaunpur built a number of mosques, the most important of which is the Atala Devi Masjid. The rulers of Bengal built Chota Sona Masjid and Bara Sona Masjid. These are typical examples of Muslim architecture influenced by the Hindu style. The rulers of Malwa and Gujarat constructed beautiful mosques and palaces in Mandu and Ahmadabad respectively. The Bahmani kings of the Deccan were equally great builders. They beautified their capitals like Gulbarga, Bidar and Bijapur with artistic mosques and massive forts which are monuments of their grandeur.

We have read in an earlier chapter that the Hindu rulers of Vijayanagar constructed a number of temples and forts in their State.

Painting and music were also patronised by Muslim rulers. Miniature painting and portraits of kings were produced by great painters. Even books were also decorated with paintings on the margins. Indian music was popularised by Muslim and Hindu saints. The former popularised a new form of singing called the Qawalis or devotional songs which are still sung at the time of 'Urs' at the shrines of various Muslim saints. The most common musical instruments were Sitar, Tabla and Sarangi.

In short there was a steady and continuous process of blending of Muslim and Hindu cultures during the 300 years from 1205 to 1526. A.D.





This series of two books covers the basic requirements of an Indian history course for secondary classes leading to the tenth class examination of the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations and the Central Board of Secondary Education.

The first part covers the period from the pre-historic age and the Indus Valley Civilisation to the end of the Mughal Empire. It introduces the student to the main dynasties of this period Ashoka and Harsha, the Rajputs and other kingdoms, the Delhi Sultanate, the kingdoms of the South, and the Moghuls. Emphasis has also been placed on a study of the social and economic conditions of the period.

The second part introduces the student to a study of modern Indian history. It traces the coming of the Europeans into India and the establishment of the British Empire. It deals in detail with the rise of Indian nationalism and the coming of Indian independence. Some of the contemporary problems of Indian society are also discussed in the background of the social and economic conditions of modern India.

*Part First Rs. 12.00*



**ORIENT LONGMAN LTD.**

**BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS NEW DELHI  
BANGALORE HYDERABAD**